



The Collected Poems  
of John Drinkwater





The Collected Poems  
of John Drinkwater  
Volume II 1917-1922

Sidgwick and Jackson  
Limited London 1923

1621

*Printed in Great Britain  
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh*

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## *The Midlands*

BLACK in the summer night my Cotswold hill  
Aslant my window sleeps, beneath a sky  
Deep as the bedded violets that fill  
    March woods with dusky passion As I lie  
Abed between cool walls I watch the host  
    Of the slow stars lit over Gloucester plain,  
And drowsily the habit of these most  
    Beloved of English lands moves in my brain,  
While silence holds dominion of the dark,  
Save when the foxes from the spinneys bark

I see the valleys in their morning mist  
Wreathed under limpid hills in moving light,  
Happy with many a yeoman melodist  
    I see the little roads of twinkling white  
Busy with fieldward teams and market gear  
    Of rosy men, cloth gaitered, who can tell  
The many-minded changes of the year,  
    Who know why crops and kine fare ill or well,  
I see the sun persuade the mist away,  
Till town and stead are shining to the day

I see the wagons move along the rows  
    Of ripe and summer-breathing clover-flower,  
I see the lissom husbandman who knows  
    Deep in his heart the beauty of his power,  
As, lithely pitched, the full-heaped fork bids on  
    The harvest home I hear the rickyard fill  
With gossip as in generations gone,  
    While wagon follows wagon from the hill.  
I think how, when our seasons all are sealed,  
    Shall come the unchanging harvest from the field.

I see the barns and comely manors planned  
    By men who somehow moved in comely thought,  
Who, with a simple shippon to their hand,  
    As men upon some godlike business wrought,  
I see the little cottages that keep  
    Their beauty still where since Plantagenet  
Have come the shepherds happily to sleep,  
    Finding the loaves and cups of cider set ;  
I see the twisted shepherds, brown and old,  
    Driving at dusk their glimmering sheep to fold.

And now the valleys that upon the sun  
    Broke from their opal veils, are veiled again,

And the last light upon the wolds is done,  
And silence falls on flocks and fields and men  
And black upon the night I watch my hill,  
And the stars shine, and there an owly wing  
Brushes the night, and all again is still,  
And, from this land of worship that I sing,  
I turn to sleep, content that from my sires  
I draw the blood of England's midmost shires

# *Plough*

THE snows are come in early state,  
And love shall now go desolate  
If we should keep too close a gate.

Over the woods a splendour falls  
Of death, and grey are the Gloucester walls,  
And grey the skies for burials.

But secret in the falling snow  
I see the patient ploughman go,  
And watch the quiet furrows grow.

## *Inscription for a War Memorial Fountain*

THEY nothing feared whose names I celebrate  
Greater than death they died, and their estate  
Is here on Cotswold comradely to live  
Upon your lips in every draught I give

## *Cotswold Love*

BLUE skies are over Cotswold  
And April snows go by,  
The lasses turn their ribbons  
For April's in the sky,  
And April is the season  
When Sabbath girls are dressed,  
From Rodboro' to Campden,  
In all their silken best.

An ankle is a marvel  
When first the buds are brown,  
And not a lass but knows it  
From Stow to Gloucester town.  
And not a girl goes walking  
Along the Cotswold lanes  
But knows men's eyes in April  
Are quicker than their brains.

It's little that it matters,  
So long as you're alive,  
If you're eighteen in April,  
Or rising sixty-five,

When April comes to Amberley  
With skies of April blue,  
And Co'swold girls are bridling  
With slyly tilted shoe

# *Riches*

THE riches of the world have been  
Magnificently told ,  
The caravans of Sheba's queen,  
The chests of Tyrian gold,  
And Alexander's dusky spears,  
And Solomon his mines,  
Jerusalems of laurelled seers,  
And gospels of divines

But these are ghosts and foreign things  
When meadow grass is mown  
On Cotswold, where my summer sings  
Her cottage of grey stone,  
And no theologies have made  
So quick a Paradise  
As this my Cotswold corner laid  
Under the Cotswold skies

## *Legacy*

WHEN twice a hundred years have gone  
    Across my Cotswold eaves,  
And still the woods of Sapperton  
    Make summer of green leaves,  
Come then and sing what song you will,  
    You lovers of new time,  
But sometimes on my Cotswold hill  
    Renew my Cotswold rhyme

Make me a temple on this ground  
    Not built of mortal stone,  
But sprung from unforgotten sound  
    Of song my blood has known,  
So shall my tale not be of dust  
    Chilled in a common urn,  
While proudly through your younger lust  
    My testament shall burn

## *Cottage Song*

MORNING and night I bring  
Clear water from the spring,  
And through the lyric noon  
I hear the larks in tune,  
And when the shadows fall  
There's providence for all.

My garden is alight  
With currants red and white,  
And my blue curtains peep  
On starry courses deep,  
When down her silver tides  
The moon on Cotswold rides.

My path of paven grey  
Is thoroughfare all day  
For fellowship, till time  
Bids us with candles climb  
The little whitewashed stair  
Above my lavender.

## *The Cotswold Farmers*

SOMETIMES the ghosts forgotten go  
Along the hill-top w<sup>y</sup>3,  
And with long scythes of silver mow  
Meadows of moonlit hay,  
Until the cocks of Cotswold crow  
The coming of the day

There's Tony Turkletob who died  
When he could drink no more,  
And Uncle Heritage, the pride  
Of eighteen twenty four,  
And Ebenezer Barley tide,  
And others half a score

They fold in phantom pens, and plough  
Furrows without a share,  
And one will milk a faery cow,  
And one will stare and stare,  
And whistle ghostly tunes that now  
Are not sung anywhere

The moon goes down on Oakridge lea,  
The other world's astir,  
The Cotswold farmers silently  
Go back to sepulchre,  
The sleeping watchdogs wake, and see  
No ghostly harvester.

## *Old Crow*

THE bird in the corn  
Is a marvellous crow  
He was laid and was born  
In the season of snow,  
And he chants his old catches  
Like a ghost under hatches

He comes from the shades  
Of his wood very early,  
And works in the blades  
Of the wheat and the barley,  
And he's happy, although  
He's a grumbleton crow

The larks have devices  
For sunny delight,  
And the sheep in their fleeces  
Are woolly and white,  
But these things are the scorn  
Of the bird in the corn

And morning goes by,  
And still he is there,  
Till a rose in the sky  
Calls him back to his lair  
In the boughs where the gloom  
Is a part of his plume.

But the boy in the lane  
With his gun, by and by,  
To the heart of the grain  
Will narrowly spy,  
And the twilight will come,  
And no crow will fly home.

## *Moonlit Apples*

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows,  
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those  
Apples are deep sea apples of green There goes  
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches,  
and then

There is no sound at the top of the house of men  
Or mice, and the cloud is blown, and the moon  
again

Dapples the apples with deep sea light

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy  
beams,

On the sagging floor, they gather the silver streams  
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,  
And quiet is the steep stair under

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep  
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep  
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep  
On moon-washed apples of wonder

## *Out of the Moon*

MERELY the moonlight  
Piercing the boughs of my may-tree,  
Falling upon my ferns,  
Only the night  
Touching my ferns with silver bloom  
Of sea-flowers here in the sleeping city  
And suddenly the imagination burns  
With knowledge of many a dark significant doom  
Out of antiquity,  
Sung to hushed halls by troubadours  
Who knew the ways of the heart because they had  
seen  
The moonlight washing the garden's deeper green  
To silver flowers,  
Falling with tidings out of the moon, as now  
It falls on the ferns under my may-tree bough.

## *Elizabeth Ann*

THIS is the tale of Elizabeth Ann,  
Who went away with her fancy man

Ann was a girl who hadn't a gown  
As fine as the ladies who walk the town

All day long from seven to six  
Ann was polishing candlesticks,

For Bishops and crapulous Millionaires  
To buy for their altars or bed-chambers

And youth in a year and a year will pass,  
But there's never an end of polishing brass

All day long from seven to six—  
Seventy thousand candlesticks

So frail and lewd Elizabeth Ann  
Went away with her fancy man

You Bishops and crapulous Millionaires,  
Give her your charity, give her your prayers

## *Reverie*

HERE in the unfrequented noon,  
In the green hermitage of June,  
While overhead a rustling wing  
Minds me of birds that do not sing  
Until the cooler eve reawakes  
The service of melodious brakes,  
And thoughts are lonely rangers, here,  
In shelter of the primrose year,  
I curiously meditate  
Our brief and variable state

I think how many are alive  
Who better in the grave would thrive,  
If some so long a sleep might give  
Better instruction how to live,  
I think what splendours had been said  
By darlings now untimely dead  
Had death been wise in choice of these,  
And made exchange of obsequies

I think what loss to government  
It is that good men are content,

Well knowing that an evil will  
Is folly stricken too, and still  
Itself considers only wise  
For all rebukes and surgeries,  
That evil men should raise their pride  
To place and fortune undefined

I think how daily we beguile  
Our brains, that yet a little while  
And all our congregated schemes  
And our perplexity of dreams,  
Shall come to whole and perfect state  
I think, however long the date  
Of life may be, at last the sun  
Shall pass upon campaigns undone

I look upon the world and see  
A world colonial to me,  
Whereof I am the architect,  
And principal and intellect,  
A world whose shape and savour spring  
Out of my lone imagining,  
A world whose nature is subdued  
For ever to my instant mood,

And only beautiful can be  
Because of beauty is in me.  
And then I know that every mind  
Among the millions of my kind  
Makes earth his own particular  
And privately created star,  
That earth has thus no single state,  
Being every man articulate.  
Till thought has no horizon then  
I try to think how many men  
There are to make an earth apart  
In symbol of the urgent heart,  
For there are forty in my street,  
And seven hundred more in Greet,  
And families at Luton Hoo,  
And there are men in China, too

And what immensity is this  
That is but a parenthesis  
Set in a little human thought,  
Before the body comes to naught.  
There at the bottom of the copse  
I see a field of turnip tops,

I see the cropping cattle pass  
There in another field, of grass,  
And fields and fields, with seven towns,  
A river, and a flight of downs,  
Steeple for all religious men,  
Ten thousand trees, and orchards ten,  
A mighty span that curves away  
Into blue beauty, and I lay  
All this as quartered on a sphere  
Hung huge in space, a thing of fear  
Vast as the circle of the sky  
Completed to the astonished eye,  
And then I think that all I see,  
Whereof I frame immensity  
Globed for amazement, is no more  
Than a shire's corner, and that four  
Great shires being ten times multiplied  
Are small on the Atlantic tide  
As an emerald on a silver bowl  
And the Atlantic to the whole  
Sweep of this tributary star  
That is our earth is but        and far  
Through dreadful space the outmeasured mind  
Seeks to conceive the unconfined

I think of Time. How, when his wing  
Composes all our quarrelling  
In some green corner where May leaves  
Are loud with blackbirds on all eves,  
And all the dust that was our bones  
Is underneath memorial stones,  
Then shall old jealousies, while we  
Lie side by side most quietly,  
Be but oblivion's fools, and still  
When curious pilgrims ask "What skill  
Had these that from oblivion saves?"  
My song shall sing above our graves

I think how men of gentle mind,  
And friendly will, and honest kind,  
Deny their nature and appear  
Fellows of jealousy and fear,  
Having single faith, and natural wit  
To measure truth and cherish it,  
Yet, strangely, when they build in thought,  
Twisting the honesty that wrought  
In the straight motion of the heart,  
Into its feigning counterpart  
That is the brain's betrayal of

The simple purposes of love ,  
And what yet sorrier decline  
Is theirs when, eager to confine  
No more within the silent brain  
Its habit, thought seeks birth again  
In speech, as honesty has done  
In thought , then even what had won  
From heart to brain fades and is lost  
In this pretended pentecost ,  
This their forlorn captivity  
To speech, who have not learnt to be  
Lords of the word, nor kept among  
The sterner climates of the tongue  
So truth is in their hearts, and then  
Falls to confusion in the brain ,  
And, fading through this mid eclipse  
It perishes upon the lips

I think how year by year I still  
Find working in my dauntless will  
Sudden timidities that are  
Merely the echo of some far  
Forgotten tyrannies that came  
To youth's bewilderment and shame ,

That yet a magisterial gown,  
Being worn by one of no renown  
And half a generation less  
In years than I, can dispossess  
Something my circumspecter mood  
Of excellence and quietude,  
And if a Bishop speaks to me  
I tremble with propriety.

I think how strange it is that he  
Who goes most comradely with me  
In beauty's worship, takes delight  
In shows that to my eager sight  
Are shadows and unmanifest,  
While beauty's favour and behest  
To me in motion are revealed  
That is against his vision sealed ,  
Yet is our hearts' necessity  
Not twofold, but a common plea  
That chaos come to continence,  
Whereto the arch-intelligence  
Richly in divers voices makes  
Its answer for our several sakes.

I see the disinherited  
And long procession of the dead,  
Who have in generations gone  
Held fugitive dominion  
Of this same primrose pasturage  
That is my momentary wage  
I see two lovers move along  
These shadowed silenees of song,  
With spring in blossom at their feet  
More incommunicably sweet  
To their hearts' more magnificence,  
Than to the common courts of sense,  
Till joy his tardy closure tells  
With coming of the curfew bells  
I see the knights of spur and sword  
Crossing the little woodland ford,  
Riding in ghostly cavalcade  
On some unchronicled crusade  
I see the silent hunter go  
In cloth of yeoman green, with bow  
Strung, and a quiver of grey wings  
I see the little herd who brings  
His cattle homeward, while his sire  
Makes bivouac in Warwickshire  
This night, the liege and loyal man

Of Cavalier or Puritan  
And as they pass, the nameless dead  
Unsung, uncelebrate, and sped  
Upon an unremembered hour  
As any twelvemonth fallen flower,  
I think how strangely yet they live  
For all then days were fugitive

I think how soon we too shall be  
A story with our ancestry

I think what miracle has been  
That you whose love among this green  
Delightful solitude is still  
The stay and substance of my will,  
The dear custodian of my song,  
My thrifty counsellor and strong,  
Should take the time of all time's tide  
That was my season, to abide  
On earth also ; that we should be  
Charted across eternity  
To one elect and happy day  
Of yellow primroses in May.

The clock is calling five o'clock,  
And Nonesopretty brings her flock  
To fold, and Tom comes back from town  
With hose and ribbons worth a crown,  
And duly at The Old King's Head  
They gather now to daily bread,  
And I no more may meditate  
Our brief and variable state

## *'To Alice Meynell*

I too have known my mutinies,  
    Played with improvident desires.  
Gone indolently vain as these  
    Whose lips from undistinguished choirs  
        Mock at the music of our sires.

I too have erred in thought. In hours  
    When needy life forbade me bring  
To song the brain's unravished powers,  
    Then had it been a temperate thing  
        Loosely to pluck an easy string

Yet thought has been, poor profligate,  
    Sin's period. Through dear and long  
Obedience I learn to hate  
    Unhappy lethargies that wrong  
        The larger loyalties of song

And you upon your slender reed,  
    Most exquisitely tuned, have made

For every singing heart a creed  
And I have heird, and I have played  
My lonely music unafraid,

Knowing that still a friendly few,  
Turning aside from turbulence,  
Cherish the difficult phrase, the due  
Bridals of disembodied sense  
With the new word's magnificence

## *Penances*

These are my happy penances. To make  
Beauty without a covenant, to take  
Measure of time only because I know  
That in death's market-place I still shall owe  
Service to beauty that shall not be done,  
To know that beauty's doctrine is begun  
And makes a close in sacrifice, to find  
In beauty's courts the unappeasable mind

## *Habitation*

High up in the sky there, now, you know,  
In this May twilight, our cottage is asleep,  
Tenantless, and no creature there to go  
Near it but Mrs Fry's fat cows, and sheep  
Dove-coloured, as is Cotswold No one hears  
Under that cherry tree the night-jars yet,  
The windows are uncurtained, on the stairs  
Silence is but by tip toe silence met  
All doors are fast there It is a dwelling put by  
From use for a little, or long, up there in the sky

Empty, a walled-in silence, in this twilight of  
May—  
A home for lovers, and friendly withdrawing, and  
sleep,  
With none to love there, nor laugh, nor climb from  
the day  
To the candles and linen Yet in the silence  
creep,  
This minute, I know, little ghosts, little virtuous  
lives,  
Breathing upon that still, insensible place,

Touching the latches, sorting the napkins and knives,  
And such for the comfort of being, and bowls for the grace,  
That roses will brim , they are creeping from that room to this,  
One room, and two, till the four are visited . . . they,  
Little ghosts, little lives, are our thoughts in this twilight of May,  
Signs that even the curious man would miss,  
Of travelling lovers to Cotswold, signs of an hour,  
Very soon, when up from the valley in June will ride  
Lovers by Lynch to Oakridge up in the wide Bow of the hill, to a garden of lavender flower. . . .

The doors are locked , no foot falls , the hearths are dumb  
But we are there we are waiting ourselves who come.

## *Blackbird*

HE comes on chosen evenings,  
My blackbird bountiful, and sings  
Over the gardens of the town  
Just at the hour the sun goes down  
His flight across the chimneys thick,  
By some divine arithmetic,  
Comes to his customary stack,  
And couches there his plumage black,  
And there he lifts his yellow bill,  
Kindled against the sunset, till  
These suburbs are like Dymock woods  
Where music has her solitudes,  
And while he mocks the winter's wrong  
Rapt on his pinnacle of song,  
Figured above our garden plots  
Those are celestial chimney pots

## *Southampton Bells*

### I

LONG ago some builder thrust  
Heavenward in Southampton town  
His spire and beamed his bells,  
Largely conceiving from the dust  
That pinnacle for ringing down  
Orisons and Noels.

In his imagination rang,  
Through generations challenging  
His peal on simple men,  
Who, as the heart within him sang,  
In daily townfaring should sing  
By year and year again.

Now often to their ringing go  
The bellmen with lean Time at heel,  
Intent on daily cares ,  
The bells ring high, the bells ring low,  
The ringers ring the builder's peal  
Of tidings unawares

And all the bells might well be dumb  
For any quickening in the street  
Of customary ears ,  
And so at last proud builders come  
With dreams and virtues to defeat  
Among the clouding years

Now, waiting on Southampton sea  
For exile, through the silver night  
I hear Noel ! Noel !  
Through generations down to me  
Your challenge, builder, comes aright,  
Bell by obedient bell

You wake an hour with me, then wide  
Though be the lapses of your sleep  
You yet shall wake again,  
And thus, old builder, on the tide  
Of immortality you keep  
Your way from brain to brain.

## *Mystery*

THINK not that mystery has place  
In the obscure and veiled face,  
Or when the midnight watches are  
Unaccompanied of moon or star,  
Or where the fields and forests lie  
Enfolded from the loving eye  
By fogs rebellious to the sun,  
Or when the poet's rhymes are spun  
From dreams that even in his own  
Imagining are half-unknown

These are not mystery, but mere  
Conditions that deny the clear  
Reality that lies behind  
The weak, unspeculative mind,  
Behind contagions of the air  
And screens of beauty everywhere,  
The brooding and tormented sky,  
The hesitation of an eye

Look rather when the landscapes glow  
Through crystal distances as though

The forty shires of England spread  
Into one vision harvested,  
Or when the moonlit waters lie  
In silver cold lucidity ,  
Those countenances search that bear  
Witness to very character,  
And listen to the song that weighs  
A life's adventure in a phrase  
These are the founts of wonder, these  
The plainer miracles to please  
The brain that reads the world aright ;  
Here is the mystery of light.

## *Mrs Willow*

MRS THOMAS WILLOW seems very glum  
Her life, perhaps, is very lonely and hum-drum,  
Digging up potatoes, cleaning out the weeds,  
Doing the little for a lone woman's needs  
Who was her husband ? How long ago ?  
What does she wonder ? What does she know ?  
Why does she listen over the wall,  
Morning and noon-time and twilight and all,  
As though unforgotten were some footfall ?

“Good morning, Mrs Willow” “Good morning,  
sir,”

Is all the conversation I can get from her  
And her path stones are white as lilies of the wood,  
And she washes this and that till she must be very  
good

She sends no letters, and no one calls,  
And she doesn't go whispering beyond her walls,  
Nothing in her garden is secret, I think—  
That's all sun bright with foxglove and pink  
And she doesn't hover round old cupboards and  
shelves

As old people do who have buried themselves ,  
She has no late lamps, and she digs all day  
And polishes and plants in a common way,  
But glum she is, and she listens now and then  
For a footfall, a footfall, a footfall again,  
And whether it's hope, or whether it's dread,  
Or a poor old fancy in her head,  
I shall never be told ; it will never be said

## *Constancy*

THE shadows that companion me  
From chronicles and poetry  
More constant and substantial are  
Than these my men familiar,  
Who draw with me uncertain breath  
A little while this side of death,  
For you, my friend, may fail to keep  
To morrow's tryst, so darkly deep  
The motions mutable that give  
To flesh its brief prerogative,  
And in the pleasant hours we make  
Together for devotion's sake,  
Always the testament I see  
That is our twin mortality  
But those from the recorded page  
Keep an eternal pilgrimage  
They steadfastly inhabit here  
With no mortality to fear,  
And my communion with them  
Ails not in the mind's stratagem  
Against the sudden blow, the date  
That once must fall unfortunate

They fret not nor persuade, and when  
These graduates I entertain,  
I grieve not that I too must fall  
As you, my friend, to funeral,  
But rather find example there  
That, when my boughs of time are bare,  
And nothing more the body's chance  
Governs my careful circumstance,  
I shall, upon that later birth,  
Walk in immortal fields of earth.

## *Buds*

THE raining hour is done,  
And, threaded on the bough,  
The may-buds in the sun  
Are shining emeralds now

As transitory these  
As things of April will,  
Yet, trembling in the trees,  
Is briefer beauty still

For, flowering from the sky  
Upon an April day,  
Are silver buds that lie  
Amid the buds of may

The April emeralds now,  
While thrushes fill the lane,  
Are linked along the bough  
With silver buds of rain

And, straightly though to earth  
The buds of silver slip,  
The green buds keep the mirth  
Of that companionship.

## *Crocuses*

(TO E H C)

DESIRS,  
Little determined desires,  
Gripped by the mould,  
Moving so hardly among  
The earth, of whose heart they were bred,  
That is old, it is old,  
Not gracious to little desires such as these,  
But apter for work on the bases of trees,  
Whose branches are hung  
Overhead,  
Very mightily, there overhead

Through the summer they stirred,  
They strove to the bulbs after May,  
Until harvest and song of the bird  
Went together away,  
And ever till coming of snows  
They worked in the mould, for undaunted were  
those  
Swift little determined desires, in the earth

Without sign, any day,  
Ever shaping to marvels of birth,  
Far away

And we went  
Without heed  
On our way,  
Never knowing what virtue was spent,  
Day by day,  
By those little desires that were gallant to breed  
Such beauty as fortitude may.  
Not once in our mind  
Was that corner of earth under trees,  
Very mighty and tall,  
As we travelled the roads and the seas,  
And gathered the wage of our kind,  
And were laggard or trim to the call  
Of the duties that lengthen the hours  
Into seasons that flourish and fall.

And blind,  
In the womb of the flowers,  
Unresting they wrought,  
In the bulbs, in the depth of the year,

Buried far from our thought ,  
Till one day, when the thrushes were clear  
In their note it was spring—and they know—  
Unheeding we came into sight  
Of that corner forgotten, and lo,  
They had won through the meshes of mould,  
And treasures lay in the light,  
Of ivory, purple, and gold

## *Reality*

It is strange how we travel the wide world over,  
And see great churches and foreign streets,  
And armies afoot and kings of wonder,  
And deeds a-doing to fill the sheets  
That grave historians will pen  
To ferment the brains of simple men.

And all the time the heart remembers  
The quiet habit of one far place,  
The drawings and books, the turn of a passage,  
The glance of a dear familiar face,  
And there is the true cosmopolis,  
While the thronging world a phantom is

## *Shows*

Just as with men and women met  
In daily usage of the town,  
I treat with you, and this forget  
In charity, and that set down  
Where memory your honour keeps

And you approach me every day  
With an indifferent judgment, count  
My virtues from my frailties, weigh  
Coldly the motives at the fount  
Whence welling every action leaps

And thus the world sees, this it knows  
For all the marriage of our wit  
And thus the world divines the shows  
Of service, while the pearl of it  
Glows in unfathomable deeps

## *Character*

If one should tell you that in such a spring  
The hawthorn boughs into the blackbird's nest  
Poured poison, or that once at harvesting  
The ears were stony, from so manifest  
Slander of proven faith in tree and corn  
You would turn unheeding, knowing him forsworn.

Yet now, when one whose life has never known  
Corruption, as you know · whose days have been  
As daily tidings in your heart of lone  
And gentle courage, suffers the word unclean  
Of envious tongues, doubting you dare not cry  
“ I have been this man's familiar, and you lie.”

## *Rupert Brooke*

(DIED APRIL 23, 1915)

To-DAY I have talked with old Euripides,  
Shakespeare this morning sang for my content  
Of chimney sweepers, through the Carian trees  
Comes beating still the nightingales' lament,  
The Tabard ales to day are freshly brewed,  
Wordsworth is with me, mounting Loughrigg  
Fell,  
All timeless deaths in Lycid are renewed,  
And basil blossom yet for Isabel

Quick thoughts are these, they do not pass, they  
gave  
Only to death such little, casual things  
As are the noteless levies of the grave,—  
Sad flesh, weak verse, and idle marketings  
So my mortality for yours complains,  
While our immortal fellowship remains

## *On Reading Francis Ledwidge's Last Songs*

At April's end, when blossoms break  
To birth upon my apple tree,  
I know the certain year will take  
Full harvest of this infancy.

At April's end, when comes the dear  
Occasion of your valley tune,  
I know your beauty's arc is here,  
A little ghostly morning moon.

Yet are these fosterlings of rhyme  
As fortunately born to spend  
Happy conspiracies with time  
As apple flowers at April's end.

## *Charge to the Players*

THE TROJAN WOMEN, BIRMINGHAM REPERTORY  
THEATRE, APRIL 1918

SHADES, that our town fellows have come  
To hear rewake for Christendom  
This cleansing of a Pagan wrong  
In flowing tides of tragic song,—  
You shadows that the living call  
To walk again the Trojan wall,—  
You lips and countenance renewed  
Of an immortal fortitude,—  
Know that, among the silent rows  
Of these our daily town fellows,  
Watching the shades with these who bring  
But mortal ears to this you sing,  
There somewhere sits the Greek who made  
This gift of song, himself a shade

## *Nemesis*

WHILE honour droops, your argument  
Brings you the profits of your trade  
And nothing mars your foul content  
Where truth's a shade.

And we, sad wisdom, are but dumb  
Herds of the waste, until again  
The angels of persuasion come  
To govern men

If you should prosper for a year,  
Or if uncalendared the date,  
Truth as a patient gospeller  
Will wait, and wait.

While we in speculation brood  
Your evil tongues are on the mount,  
Till every poor unlessoned mood  
Comes to account

## *The Life of John Heritage*

BORN in the Cotswolds in eighteen-forty or so,  
Bred on a hill top that seemed the most of the world  
Until he travelled the valleys, and found what a  
wonder

Of leagues from Gloucester lay to Stroud or Cirencester,  
John Heritage was a tiler. He split the stone,  
After the frosts, and learnt the laying of tiles,  
And was famous about the shire. And he was  
friendly

With Cotswold nature, hearing the hidden rooks  
In Golden Vale, and the thin bleat of goats  
And the rattling harness of Trilly's teams at plough,  
And Richard Parker's scythe for many years,  
As he went upon his tiling, and the great land-  
marks,  
As loops of the Severn seen from Bisley Hill,  
Were his familiars, something of his religion

And he prospered, as men do. His little wage  
Yet left a little over his wedded needs,  
And here a cottage he bought, and there another,

About the Cotswolds, built of the royallest stone  
That's quarried in England, until he could think  
of age

With an easy mind . and an acre of land was his  
Where at hay-harvest he worked a little from tiling,  
Making his rick maturely or damning the wind  
That scattered the swathes beyond his fork's con-  
trolling.

And he trotted ajog to the town on market  
Thursdays,

Driving a stout succession of good black geldings,  
That cropped his acre some twenty years apiece.  
And he was an honest neighbour . and so he grew  
old,

And five strong sons, grizzled and middle-aged,  
Carried him down the hill, and on a stone  
The mason cut “ John Heritage, who died,  
Fearing the Lord, at the age of seventy-six.”

And I know that some of us shatter our hearts on  
earth,

With mightier aims than ever John Heritage knew,  
And think such things as never the tiler thought,  
Because of our pride and our eagerness of mind . . .

But a life complete is a great nobility,  
And there's a wisdom biding in Cotswold stone,  
While we in our furious intellectual travel  
Fall in with strange foot-fellows on the road

—

## *Thomast Yarnton of Tarlton*

ONE of those old men fearing no man,  
Two hundred broods his eaves have known  
Since they cut on a Sapperton churchyard stone  
“ Thomas Yarnton of Tarlton, Yeoman.”

At dusk you can hear the yeomen calling  
The cattle still to Sapperton stalls,  
And still the stroke of the woodman falls  
As Thomas of Tarlton heard it falling.

I walked these meadows in seventeen-hundred,  
Seed of his loins, a dream that stirred  
Beyond the shape of a yeoman’s word,  
So faint that but unawares he wondered.

And now, from the weeds of his tomb uncomely,  
I travel again the tracks he made,  
And walks at my side the yeoman shade  
Of Thomas Yarnton of Tarlton dumbly.

## *Written in Winterborne Came Church\**

(TO MRS THOMAS HARDY)

I do not use to listen well  
At sermon time,  
I'd rather hear the plainest rhyme  
Than tales the parsons tell,

The homespun of experience  
They will not wear,  
But walk a transcendental air  
In dusty rags of sense

But humbly in your little church  
Alone I watch,  
Old rector, lift again the latch,  
Here is a heart to search

Come, with a simple word and wise  
Quicken my brain,

\* William Barnes 1801-1886, Rector

And while upon the painted pane  
The painted butterflies

Beat in the early April beams,  
You shall instruct  
My spirit in the knowledge plucked  
From your still Dorset dreams

Your word shall strive with no obscure  
Debated text,  
Your vision being unperplexed,  
Your loving purpose pure

I know you'll speak of April flowers,  
Or lambs in pen,  
Or happy-hearted maids and men  
Weaving their April hours

Or rising to your thought will come,  
For lessoning,  
Those lovers of an older spring,  
That now in tombs are dumb.

And brooding in your theme shall be,  
Half said, half heard,  
The presage of a poet's word  
To mock mortality

The years are on your grave the while,  
And yet, almost,  
I think to see your surpliced ghost  
Stand hesitant in the aisle,

Find me sole congregation there,  
Assess my mood,  
Know mine a kindred solitude,  
And climb the pulpit-stair

## *The Fugitive*

BEAUTY has come to make no longer stay  
Than the bright buds of may  
In May-time do.

Beauty is with us for one hour, one hour,  
Life is so brief a flower,  
Thoughts are so few.

Thoughts are so few with mastery to give  
Shape to these fugitive  
Dear brevities,

That even in its hour beauty is blind,  
Because the shallow mind  
Not sees, not sees.

And in the mind of man only can be  
Alert prosperity  
For beauty brief.

So, what can be but little comes to less  
Upon the wilderness  
Of disbelief.

And beauty that has but an hour to spend  
With you for friend,  
Goes outcast by

But know, but know—for all she is outcast—  
It is not she at last,  
But you that die

## *Trial*

BEAUTY of old and beauty yet to be,  
Stripped of occasion, have security ;  
This hour it is searches the judgment through,  
When masks of beauty walk with beauty too

## *At an Inn*

We are talkative proud, and assured, and self-sufficient,

The quick of the earth this day,  
This inn is ours, and its courtyard, and English history,  
And the Post Office up the way

The stars in their changes, and heavenly speculation  
The habits of birds and flowers,  
And character bred of poverty and riches,  
All these are ours

The world is ours, and these its themes and its substance,  
And of these we are free men and wise,  
Among them all we move in possession and judgment,  
For a day, till it dies

But in eighteen hundred and-fifty, who were the tenants,  
Sure and deliberate as we ?  
They knew us not in the time of their ascension,  
Their self sufficiency

And in nineteen-hundred-and-fifty this inn shall  
flourish,  
And history still be told,  
And the heat of blood shall thrive, and speculation,  
When we are cold.

## *Moonrise*

WHERE are you going, you pretty riders ?—

To the moon's rising, the rising of death's moon,  
Where the waters move not, and birds are still and  
    songless,  
Soon, very soon

Where are you faring to, you proud Hectors ?

Through battle, out of battle, under the grass,  
Dust behind your hoof-beats rises, and into dust,  
    Clouded, you pass

I'm a pretty rider, I'm a proud Hector,  
    I as you a little am pretty and proud,  
I with you am riding, riding to the moonrise,  
    So sing we loud—

“Out beyond the dust lies mystery of moonrise,  
    We go to chiller learning than is bred in the sun,  
Hectors, and riders, and a simple singer,  
    Riding as one”

# *Of Iles Farm*

(TO MY FRIENDS THERE)

HERE is a theme for graver tones  
Than now I sing.  
It shelters you, it is a pole  
For thought upon your travelling;  
Here dreams established are in stones,  
To mark and bring  
Irresolutions to control  
From truant wing.

But not of these my argument.  
I celebrate  
Your hearth, your comfortable speech  
Of young years and late,  
Your courtesies that are content  
To sow and wait,  
For these as planets are to teach  
My travel to your gate

## *Provocations*

I AM no merry monger when  
I see the slatterns of the town  
I hate to think of docile men  
Whose angers all are driven down,  
For sluts make joy a thing obscene,  
And in contempt is nothing clean

I like to see the ladies walk  
With heels to set their chins atilt  
I like to hear the clergy talk  
Of other clergy's people's guilt,  
For happy is the amorous eye,  
And indignation clears the sky

## *Instruction*

I HAVE a place in a little garden,  
That laurel-leaf and fern  
Keep a cool place though fires of summer  
All the green grasses burn.  
Little cool winds creep there about  
When winds all else are dead,  
And tired limbs there find gentle keeping,  
And humours of sloth are shed.

So do your songs come always to me,  
Poets of age and age,  
Clear and cool as rivers of wind  
Threading my hermitage,  
Stilling my mind from tribulation  
Of life half-seen, half-heard,  
With images made in the brain's quietness,  
And the leaping of a word.

## *Responsibility*

You ploughmen at the gate,  
All that you are for me  
Is of my mind create,  
And in my brain to be  
A figure newly won  
From the world's confusion

And if you are of grace,  
That's honesty for me,  
And if of evil face,  
Recorded then shall be  
Dishonour that I saw  
Not beauty, but the flaw

## *History*

SOMETIMES, when walls and occupation seem  
A prison merely, a dark barrier  
Between me everywhere  
And life, or the larger province of the mind,  
As dreams confined,  
As the trouble of a dream,  
I seek to make again a life long gone,  
To be  
My mind's approach and consolation,  
To give it form's lucidity,  
Resilient form, as porcelain pieces thrown  
In buried China by a wrist unknown,  
Or mirrored brigs upon Fowey sea.

Then to my memory comes nothing great  
Of purpose, or debate,  
Or perfect end,  
Pomp, nor love's rapture, nor heroic hours to  
    spend  
But most, and strangely, for long and so much have  
    I seen,

Comes back an afternoon  
Of a June  
Sunday at Elsfield, that is up on a green  
Hill, and there,  
Through a little farm parlour door,  
A floor  
Of red tiles and blue,  
And the air  
Sweet with the hot June sun cascading through  
The vine leaves under the glass, and a scarlet fume  
Of geranium flower, and soft and yellow bloom  
Of musk, and stains of scarlet and yellow glass

Such are the things remain  
Quietly, and for ever, in the brain,  
And the things that they choose for history making  
pass

## *The Talent*

WHEN we as ghosts inhabit history,  
In reputation happy or forlorn,  
Uncounted then shall all our quarrels be  
As any dusty calendar outworn.

“ They, with what wit they might, immortal dress  
Devised for instant beauty ere they died.”  
So shall we live, but shall not live by less ;  
O brief and bitter hearts, be pacified.

## *Dear and Incomparable*

DEAR and incomparable  
Is that love to me  
Flowing out of the woodlands,  
Out of the sea,  
Out of the firmament breathing  
Between pasture and sky,  
For no reward is cherished here  
To reckon by

It is not of my earning,  
Nor forfeit I can  
This love that flows upon  
The poverty of man,  
Though faithless and unkind  
I sleep and forget,  
This love that asks no wage of me  
Waits my waking yet

Of such is the love, dear,  
That you fold me in,  
It knows no governance  
Of virtue or sin,

From nothing of my achieving  
Shall it enrichment take,  
And the glooms of my unworthiness  
It will not forsake.

## *The Wood*

I WALKED a nut-wood's gloom And overhead  
A pigeon's wing beat on the hidden boughs,  
And shrews upon shy tunnelling woke thin  
Late winter leaves with trickling sound Across  
My narrow path I saw the carrier ants  
Burdened with little pieces of bright straw  
These things I heard and saw, with senses fine  
For all the little traffic of the wood,  
While everywhere, above me, underfoot,  
And haunting every avenue of leaves,  
Was mystery, unresting, taciturn

And haunting the lucidities of life  
That are my daily beauty, moves a theme,  
Beating along my undiscovered mind

## *At an Earthworks*

RINGED high with turf the arena lies,  
The neighbouring world unseen, unheard,  
Here are but unhorizoned skies,  
And on the skies a passing bird,

The conies and a wandering sheep,  
The castings of the chambered mole,  
These, and the haunted years that keep  
Lost agonies of blood and soul.

They say that in the midnight moon  
The ghostly legions gather yet,  
And hear a ghostly timbrel-tune,  
And see a ghostly combat met

These are but yeoman's tales And here  
No marvel on the midnight falls,  
But starlight marvellously clear,  
Being girdled in these shadowy walls.

Yet now strange glooms of ancestry  
Creep on me through this morning light,  
Some spectral self is seeking me  
I will not parley with the night

## *The Patriot*

SCARCE is my life more dear to me,  
    Brief tutor of oblivion,  
Than fields below the rookery  
    That comfortably looks upon  
    The little street of Piddington.

I never think of Avon's meadows,  
    Ryton woods or Rydal mere,  
Or moon-tide moulding Cotswold shadows,  
    But I know that half the fear  
    Of death's indifference is here.

I love my land    No heart can know  
    The patriot's mystery, until  
It aches as mine for woods ablow  
    In Gloucestershire with daffodil,  
    Or Bicester brakes that violets fill.

No man can tell what passion surges  
    For the house of his nativity  
In the patriot's blood, until he purges

His grosser mood of jealousy,  
And comes to meditate with me

Of gifts of earth that stamp his brain  
As mine the pools of Ludlow mill,  
The hazels fencing Trilly's Lane,  
And Forty Acres under Brill,  
The ferry under Elsfield hill

These are what England is to me,  
Not empire, nor the name of her  
Ranging from pole to tropic sea  
These are the soil in which I bear  
All that I have of character

That men my fellows near and far  
May live in like communion,  
Is all I pray, all pastures are  
The best beloved beneath the sun,  
I have my own, I envy none

## *Deer*

SHY in their herding dwell the fallow deer.  
They are spirits of wild sense. Nobody near  
Comes upon their pastures. There a life they live,  
Of sufficient beauty, phantom, fugitive,  
Treading as in jungles free leopards do,  
Printless as evelight, instant as dew.  
The great kine are patient, and home-coming sheep  
Know our bidding The fallow deer keep  
Delicate and far their counsels wild,  
Never to be folded reconciled  
To the spoiling hand as the poor flocks are ;  
Lightfoot, and swift, and unfamiliar,  
These you may not hinder, unconfined  
Beautiful flocks of the mind.

## *On a Lake*

SWEET in the rushes  
The reed singers make  
A music that hushes  
The life of the lake,  
The leaves are dumb,  
And the tides are still,  
And no calls come  
From the flocks on the hill

Forgotten now  
Are nightingales,  
And on his bough  
The linnet fails,—  
Midway the mere  
My mirrored boat  
Shall rest and hear  
A slenderer note

Though, heart, you measure  
But one proud rhyme,  
You build a treasure  
Confounding time—

Sweet in the rushes  
The reed-singers make  
A music that hushes  
The life of the lake.

## *Harvest Moon*

“Hush!” was my whisper  
At the stair top  
When the waggoners were down below  
Home from the barley-crop  
Through the high window  
Looked the harvest moon,  
While the waggoners sang  
A harvest tune,—  
“Hush!” was my whisper when  
Marjory stept  
Down from her attic-room,  
A true love adept

“Fill a can, fill a can,”  
Waggoners of heart were they,  
“Harvest-home, harvest-home,  
Barleycorn is home to-day”  
“Marjory, hush now—  
Harvest—you hear?”—  
Red was the moon’s rose  
On the full year,

The cobwebs shook, so well  
Did the waggoners sing  
“Hush!” there was beauty at  
That harvesting.

## *Passage*

WHEN you deliberate the page  
Of Alexander's pilgrimage,  
Or say—"It is three years, or ten,  
Since Easter slew Connolly's men,"  
Or prudently to judgment come  
Of Antony or Absalom,  
And think how duly are designed  
Case and instruction for the mind,  
Remember then that also we,  
In a moon's course, are history

## *The Common Lot*

WHEN youth and summertime are gone,  
And age puts quiet garlands on,  
And in the speculative eye  
The fires of emulation die,  
But as to-day our time shall be  
Trembling upon eternity,  
While, still inconstant in debate,  
We shall on revelation wait,  
And age as youth will daily plan  
The sailing of the caravan.

## *To One I Love*

As I walked along the passage, in the night, beyond  
the stairs,

In the dark,

I was afraid,

Suddenly,

As will happen you know, my dear, it will often  
happen

I knew the walls at my side,

Knew the drawings hanging there, the order of  
their placing,

And the door where my bed lay beyond,

And the window on the landing—

There was even a little ray of moonlight through  
it—

All was known, familiar, my comfortable home,

And yet I was afraid,

Suddenly,

In the dark, like a child, of nothing,

Of vastness, of eternity, of the queer pains of  
thought,

Such as used to trouble me when I heard,

When I was little, the people talk.

On Sundays of "As it was in the Beginning,  
Is Now, and Ever Shall Be. . . ."  
I am thirty-six years old,  
And folk are friendly to me,  
And there are no ghosts that should have reason to  
    haunt me,  
And I have tempted no magical happenings  
By forsaking the clear noons of thought  
For the wizardries that the credulous take  
To be golden roads to revelation.  
I knew all was simplicity there,  
Without conspiracy, without antagonism,  
And yet I was afraid,  
Suddenly,  
A child, in the dark, forlorn. . . .  
And then, as suddenly,  
I was aware of a profound, a miraculous under-  
    standing,  
Knowledge that comes to a man  
But once or twice, as a bird's note  
In the still depth of the night  
Striking upon the silence . . . .  
I stood at the door, and there  
Was mellow candle-light,  
And companionship, and comfort,

And I knew  
That it was even so,  
That it must be even so  
With death  
I knew  
That no harm could have touched me out of my fear,  
Because I had no grudge against anything,  
Because I had desired  
In the darkness, when fear came,  
Love only, and pity, and fellowship,  
And it would have been a thing monstrous,  
Something defying nature  
And all the simple universal fitness  
For any force there to have come evilly  
Upon me, who had no evil in my heart,  
But only trust, and tenderness  
For every presence about me in the air,  
For the very shadow about me,  
Being a little child for no one's envy  
And I knew that God  
Must understand that we go  
To death as little children,  
Desiring love so simply, and love's defence,  
And that he would be a barren God, without  
humour,

To cheat so little, so wistful, a desire,  
That he created  
In us, in our childishness . . .  
And I may never again be sure of this,  
But there, for a moment,  
In the candle-light,  
Standing at the door,  
I knew.

## *Harvesting*

PALE sheaves of oats, pocked by untimely rain,  
Under October skies,  
Teased and forlorn,  
Ungathered lie where still the tardy wain  
Comes not to seal  
The seasons of the corn,  
From prime to June, with running barns of grain  
  
Now time with me is at the middle year,  
The register of youth  
Is now to sing  
My thoughts are ripe, my moods are in full ear ,  
That they should fail  
Of harvesting,  
Uncarried on cold fields, is all my fear

# *'Thrif*

(TO F. L.)

No beauty beauty overthrows  
But every joy its season knows,  
And all enchanted hours prepare  
Enchantment for to-morrow's wear.

Who in the just society  
That walks with him this hour can see  
But shadows of another bliss  
Loses both that delight and this.

Grieve not the parting day, for soon  
The nightingales will sing the moon  
Climbing the track that now the sun  
Leaves when the songs of day are done.

And grieve not when her beauty pales,  
And silence keeps the nightingales,  
For that eclipse again will bring  
The sun with all his birds to sing.

## *The Toll-gate House*

THE toll-gate's gone, but still stands lone,  
In the dip of the hill, the house of stone,  
And over the roof in the branching pine  
The great owl sits in the white moonshine  
An old man lives, and lonely, there,  
His windows yet on the cross-roads stare,  
And on Michaelmas night in all the years  
A galloping far and faint he hears  
His casement open wide he flings  
With "Who goes there?" and a lantern swings  
But never more in the dim moonbeam  
Than a cloak and a plume and the silver gleam  
Of passing spurs in the night can he see,  
For the toll gate's gone and the road is free

## *A Lesson to my Ghost*

SHALL it be said that the wind's gone over  
The hill this night, and no ghost there ?  
Not the shape of an old-time lover  
Pacing the old road, the high road there ?  
By the peacock tree, the tree that spreads its  
branches  
Like a proud peacock's tail (so my lady says),  
Under a cloudy sky, while the moon launches  
Scattered beams of light along the dark silences ?  
I will be a ghost there, though I yet am breathing,  
A living presence still in tight cottage walls,  
Sitting by the fire whose smoke goes wreathing  
Over fields and farmyards and farmyard stalls.  
As a player going to rehearse his faring,  
I will send my ghost there before my bones are dust,  
Bid it learn betimes the sock it shall be wearing  
When it bids the clay good-bye, as all ghosts must.  
Hush, then, upstairs sleep my lady and her  
mother ;  
The cat curls the night away, and will not stir ,  
Beams of lamp and beech-log cross one another,  
No wind walks in the garden there.

Go, my ghost, it calls you, the high road, the  
winding,

Written by the moonlight on the sleeping hill ,

I will watch the ashes, you go finding

The way you shall walk for generations still

The window-latch is firm, the curtain does not  
tremble,

The wet grass bends not under your tread,

Brushing you shake not the rain from the bramble,

They hear no gate who lie abed

Nodding I stare at the hearth, but I see you,

My half-wit travels with you the road ,

There shall be your kingdom when death shall free  
you,

When body's wit is neither leash nor goad

Past the peacock branches proudly gliding,

Your own ghost now, I know, I know,

You look to the moon on the hill top riding,

The mares in the meadow sleep as you go

Your eyes that are dark yet great for divining

Brood on the valleys of wood and plough,

And you stand where the silver flower is shining

Of cherry against the black holly bough

Rehearse, O rehearse, as you pass by the hedgerows,

Remembrance of all that was my bright will,

That so my grave of whispers and echoes  
May rest for the ghost that is yet on the hill.  
The primroses burn and the cowslips cover  
The starry meadows as heaven is clad ;  
Learn them all, O ghost, as a lover,  
So shall your coming again be glad.  
The inn-sign hangs in the windless watches,  
You pass the shadowy piles of stone  
Under the walls where the hawthorn catches  
Shapes from the moon that are not its own.  
Wander, wander down by the cresses,  
Over the crest of the hill, between  
The brown lych-gate and the cider-presses,  
Past the well and across the green.  
Heed me, my ghost, my heir. To-morrow,  
Or soon, my body to ash must fall.  
Heed me, ghost, and I shall not sorrow  
Learn this beauty, O learn it all  
Night goes on, the beech-log's ended,  
Half-wit's drowsy, and doctrine done,  
Ghost, come home from the road , befriended  
My moon shall be when I leave the sun

## *Absence*

THIS was a fair land  
For the young soul to find,  
Whose orchards are renewed  
And blossom in the mind  
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,  
I dream of England still

And now this year's primrose  
Shines under last year's leaves  
The swallow searches out  
Accustomed eaves,  
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,  
I dream of England still

Though fresh devices come,  
Yet is my custom true,  
There my vocation is,  
That was my cradle too  
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,  
I dream of England still

## *A New Ballad of Charity*

God knows how time shall use me yet,  
For I with brain too wise have known  
A world corrupt, nor can forget  
Some evil there as still my own  
Poor griefs henceforth may be alone  
My calendars to reckon by,  
But in my empires overthrown  
I'll keep a heart of charity.

Wronged, and wrong doing, still I'll pray  
For gentleness to all my kind,  
So soon to-morrow strikes to-day,  
And then a day when all is blind,  
And the vainglory of the mind  
Passes, and all together lie  
Where nothing is but hope to find  
The excellence of charity.

There is no virtue in us all  
But keeps with sin for housefellow,  
And, when the blade of death shall fall,  
Starveling and naked must we go ;

And none of all shall warrant show  
To save him from damnation by,  
But only this—" Dear God, you owe  
All that I dealt of charity "

And, O you English, let us make  
Our hearts a little wise to day,  
And learn for best religion's sake  
To walk awhile the homeward way  
Too long we cast an alien clay  
And towards a far and fading sky  
Too long a pilgrimage we pay—  
For there is not our charity

Since I am English bred, I'll keep  
A year and year my journey still  
By little Langdale tarns asleep,  
Or, with my rhymes on Bredon Hill,  
I will go shepherding until  
The shires from Severn down to Wye  
Are figured messages to fill  
My quietness with charity

And where the yellow-hammer sings  
From bramble blooms in Water Lane

I'll make a world of sweeter things  
Than are in blind ambition's brain,  
And there I will forget the pain  
Of envy and the fears defy  
That in love's bitterness complain,  
Because I walk with charity.

The primroses of Bagley Wood,  
Old apple trees at Piddington,  
Helvellyn in his cloudy hood  
Shall I not write them one by one,  
The true, the best, occasion  
Of all my faith before I die ?  
For other gospellers are none  
To teach me holy charity.

## *The Recorder*

IT was not dawn, in the full day  
I drowsed my wits in sleep,  
And let the rich world steal away,  
Without a song to keep

Then from a dripping timber stack,  
Where the wild thistle grew,  
Spreading his scarlet plumes and black,  
Again the loud cock crew

## *The Wood-Carver*

(TO W. G. S.)

Out of his ash did he conceive her mood,  
Repentant Eve, her sad face bowed among  
Cascades of hair, her limbs, that had been dewed  
Lately in Eden where the apples hung,  
Now carved for ever in a lovely sorrow,  
All love, all grief, all kindred with the flowers  
That now flush wood and meadow, and to-morrow  
Are ghosts, are tears among remembered hours.  
O little Eve, bowed in your loss for ever,  
Bowed bosom and clasped hands and hidden face,  
We are your sorrow too, and master never  
The loss of spring and the wild April grace  
We love, and sin, and lose, as you to be  
An image carved in beauty from the tree.

## *The Dying Philosopher to his Fiddler*

COME, fiddler, play one tune before I die  
Philosophy is barren, and I lie  
Untouched now by the plagues of all the schools,  
And only silly fiddlers are not fools

Bring then your bow, and on the strings let be,  
In this last hour, merely the melody  
Of waves and leaves and footfalls hazardous,  
Where crafty logic shall not keep with us

The patient fields of knowledge did I sow ,  
I have done with knowledge—for I nothing know  
Wisdom and folly set their faces hence,  
And in their eyes a twin-intelligence

Only your notes may quick again the keen  
Tree-shadows cut upon the paddock's green,  
The pools where mirrored branches are at rest,  
The heron lifting to her windy nest

And these are things that know not argument ;  
Come, fiddler, play , philosophy is spent.  
Out of my thought the chiding doctors slip,  
And you are now the only scholarship.

## *The Flame*

MYSELF I do but find  
An ashen mind,  
While others greeting me  
Are flames, I see  
Yet they, alone, lameut  
Flames that are spent,  
Remembering with shame  
My crystal flame  
Hereafter then I'll be  
A flame to me

## *The Garden*

STONE walls, dear trees, worn paths of every day,  
Because you have lived so cleanly in my mind  
Something of me for ever in you shall stay,  
When I the smaller acre yet shall find.  
When noon is bright I shall be with your flowers,  
With you the snows of winter I shall wear,  
And when, enchanted in the midnight hours,  
You are a silver lake, I shall be there.

And none shall know, or few, yet, knowing not,  
The stranger here shall with your spirit take  
Into his heart a kinship unforgot  
That still you tell in numbers for my sake,  
And in your mute occasion then shall be  
Some whispered word that once you learnt of me.

## *Hereafter*

ONE evening, by some hearth, I know not when,  
A stranger to my song shall come to read  
What faring was my lot through times and men,  
How I was proud, how sorry, with what heed  
I was glad of women, and the stars, and corn  
Swelling upon my windy Cotswold height,  
What miracles I counted in the morn,  
And how I was defeated at the night  
And he shall make some story, as I make  
Of men who sang as Marvell and as Donne,  
And he shall quick his wisdom for my sake,  
And put the plumes of celebration on,  
And tell how, as of old, the clouded brain  
Of man in song was a bright heaven again

## *Votive*

O MOON, swung there immeasurably far,  
Yet only in the pear-tree top, how then  
Shall we body in thought the beauty that you are  
Your wizardry upon the souls of men ?

Hush ! Let us say it is the tender light  
That falls in silver circumstance and red  
Dimly upon the regions of the night,  
And saying this how little then is said.

Why should this mute enchantment thus possess  
Our hearts in adoration how should come  
This worship of a ghost of quietness,  
Of spectral tides that move not and are dumb ?

Why do we worship ? We are but strays of will,  
While the sun takes us. Folded now and far  
From the day's light, we are minds possessed and  
still,  
Vision and peace We worship what we are.

## *Two Ships*

THE morning shone with April on  
A little silver ship at sea,  
With happy sails, and bearing bales  
To Panama from Tripoli,  
    And fortunately bound  
    She went without a sound

Into the night, forlornly bright  
There came a little ship of gold,  
Without a name, she passed in flame,  
With cargoes never to be told,  
    Out of a port unknown,  
    Swinging to death alone

## *Portia's Housekeeping*

WE are thrifty of joy in this our modern house ;  
We probe the springs of joy with uneasy rods,  
And shadow the worm in every thrilling bud.  
Virtue we know will walk in seedy rags  
Of knavery when the better humour fails ;  
And we know the good man's shadow of desire.

It was not so with Portia. She was simple,  
Plain for clear yes or no and good or bad.  
Bassanio at Belmont in the evening,  
Walking the terrace with Antonio,  
Was a good man with his friend, and that was all,  
Save that his lips were young and masterful.  
She had no fine philosophy of sin ,  
You lied, and that was bad. You gave your word,  
And, when time came, redeemed it. A treasure  
kept  
At another's cost was ashes in your hand.  
She liked her roses red, her lilies white,  
And counted punctual hours in guests a virtue  
Sometimes she thought of a Jew and a young doctor  
Standing before the majesty of Venice,

And smiled, without approval, then again  
To sow the asters or feed guinea-fowl  
Gratiano, finding ever new Nerissas  
Among her maids, she told not to be tedious,  
And Gratiano said she was growing dull  
She liked the verse Lorenzo took to writing  
And made some tunes herself upon the lute  
To fit a little moonlight sequence When  
Launcelot Gobbo stole a goose at Christmas,  
She did not say he was an honest fellow,  
But rated him and almost sent him off,  
He didn't brag about it to his fellows  
She had two children, and said two were enough,  
And loved them She believed there was a God  
With an impatient ear for casuistry  
Bassanio had no regrets, but some  
Agreed with Gratiano I do not know  
In Belmont was a lady richly left ?

# *Night Music*

(TO B. V. J.)

ENCHANTED as those days in Caliban's isle,  
A music from the night falls on my hill,  
    And variously played  
In the hushed moonrise many sounds there are,  
Inaudible but to the moods of prayer,  
    Into one music made

Over the foothills from the valley comes  
The lowing of some straggler from the herd,  
    Roaming in pastures deep  
A sheep-dog's challenge through the dark is met  
By the ewe-mothers and their lambs that now  
    Are muffled flocks of sleep.

Sweeping across the fern twin measures go,  
Towards Worcester one, and Hereford, where  
    weave,  
    Glooming, a pair of jars.

Faintly, afar, a brown owl speaks the night,  
And hears high up, from out these hill-top pines,  
    His mate among the stars

And, under all, the wind about the gorse  
Creeps, or as fire rushes, and burns up

    All sound into one song

And in the night it flows about my grief,  
Healing a little, as on Setebos

    Was eased that older wrong

So in my heart beauty with beauty strives,  
And good slays good   O spirit of wisdom, run,

    As the wise wind to night,

Through me, and make my crazy tunes all one ,  
Upon the trouble of my blindness bring

    Light, and for ever light

## *In the Valley*

LET none devout forgive my sin  
Who have not sinned as I,  
The soul immaculate within  
Has not to measure by  
My sorrowing husbandry

The dark, the error, of my days  
Shall be consoled by none  
That have not in forbidden ways  
Wandered as I have done  
With faces from the sun.

Princes of virtue, keep your skill  
Of pardon for your peers,  
Frail with the frail I travel still  
Along uncertain years  
Forbear your holy tears.

One hour in black Gethsemane  
I walked with him alone.  
He sees, he knows, he touches me  
How shall it then be known  
To you, O hearts of stone ?

## *Malediction*

THRUSH, across the twilight  
Here in the abbey close,  
Pouring from your lilae-bough  
Note on pebbled note,  
Why do you sing so,  
Making your song so bright,  
Swelling to a throbbing curve  
That brave little throat ?

Soon, but a season brief,  
The lice among your feathers,  
Stiff-winged and aimless eyed,  
With song dead you shall fall,  
Refuse of some clotted ditch,  
Seeking no more berries,—  
Why with lyric numbers now  
Do you the twilight call ?

Proud in your tawny plumes  
Mottled in devising,  
Singing as though never sang  
Bird in close till now—

Sharp are the javelins  
Of death that are seeking,  
Seeking even simple birds  
On a lilac-bough.

Crushed, forlorn, a frozen thing,  
For no more nesting,  
For no more speckled eggs  
In pattered cup of clay,  
Soon your song shall come to this,  
You who make the twilight yours,  
And echoes of the abbey,  
At the end of day.

In the song I hear it,  
The thud of a poor feathered death,  
In the swelling throat I see  
The splintering of song  
What demon then has worked in me  
To tease my brain to bitterness  
In me who have loved bird and tree  
So long, so long ?

Until I come to charity,  
Until I find peace again,

My curse upon the fiend or god  
That will not let me hear  
A bird in song upon the bough,  
But, hovering about the notes,  
There chimes the maniac beating  
Of black winged fear

But peradventure yet  
I shall return  
To dare the weeds of death,  
And plunge through the coned pink bloom,  
And cry on that spectre set  
In its silent ring of gloom,  
And slay my youth to learn  
The thing that my old age saith

## *The Cry*

DEAR life, be merciful and kind,  
Lend me your hand, for I am blind,  
Lend me your wit, for mine too soon  
Inhabits with the spectral moon,  
Prepare your still intelligence  
To watch beside my ailing sense

Life, I have made my pilgrimage  
All as you bade, and, wage by wage,  
Your service seemed but well to me  
Now gentle in persuasion be,  
When after you I fall and bleed,  
And hear not where your footfalls lead

My song no tardy messenger  
Has been of any word that there  
Dwelt from your charge for witnessing,  
Let me not be an outcast thing,  
Dear life, this weather, from your fold,  
With a great heart untimely old

In faith to you have laboured long  
My blood, my purposes, my song.  
In faith to you my hope is dumb,  
To this poor waste of darkness come  
O life, forsake me not, who lie  
Broken upon your Calvary.

## *Who Were Before Me*

LONG time in some forgotten churchyard earth of  
Warwickshire,

My fathers in their generations lie beyond desire,  
And nothing breaks the rest, I know, of John  
Drinkwater now,

Who left in sixteen-seventy his roan team at plough

And James, son of John, is there, a mighty plough-  
man too,

Skilled he was at thatching and the barleycorn brew,  
And he had a heart-load of sorrow in his day,  
But ten score of years ago he put it away

Then Thomas came, and played a fiddle cut of  
mellow wood,

And broke his heart, they say, for love that never  
came to good

A hundred winter peals and more have rung above  
his bed—

O, poor eternal grief, so long, so lightly, comforted

And in the gentle yesterday these were but glim-  
mering tombs,  
Or tales to tell on fireside eves of legendary dooms ,  
I being life while they were none, what had their  
dust to bring  
But cold intelligence of death upon my tides of  
Spring ?

Now grief is in my shadow, and it seems well enough  
To be there with my fathers, where neither fear  
nor love  
Can touch me more, nor spite of men, nor my own  
teasing blame,  
While the slow mosses weave an end of my forgotten  
name

## *The Years*

WHEN I was young and twenty  
I'd run a many mile,  
And when I came to thirty  
I'd sit and rest awhile,  
And now that I am thirty-five  
I am the sleepiest man alive

But maybe when I'm forty  
I'll shake my legs again,  
And walk from then till fifty  
With young and striding men,  
And hillward go in sixty's wear  
To see how yet the counties fare

When I am old and eighty,  
All treasons will be done  
Of love and silly bitterness,  
And I shall watch the sun  
Go out, and little heed the fear  
That smote upon my middle-year

So twenty comes to eighty  
By many a stony track,  
And times I have for merchandise  
But sorrows in my pack  
But youth foretold them not, and yet  
Age will but count them to forget

So though I come from twenty  
To be at thirty-five,  
Beset by fears and fancies,  
The sleepiest man alive,  
Some birthday yet I'll rise and keep  
A prouder soul before I sleep.

Before I sleep at eighty,  
Never again to know  
The hill-tops and the counties  
And striding men below,  
And furious fevers fade away  
To song, and into grass my clay.

## *To and Fro About the City*

SHAKESPEARE is dust, and will not come  
To question from his Avon tomb,  
And Socrates and Shelley keep  
An Attic and Italian sleep

They will not see us, nor again  
Shall indignation light the brain  
Where Lincoln on his woodland height  
Tells out the spring and winter night

They see not But, O Christians, who  
Throng Holborn and Fifth Avenue,  
May you not meet, in spite of death,  
A traveller from Nazareth ?

## *Vocation*

THIS be my pilgrimage and goal,  
Daily to march and find  
The secret phrases of the soul,  
The evangelists of the mind.

While easy tongues are lightly heard,  
Let me with them be great  
Who still upon the perfect word  
As heavenly fowlers wait.

In taverns none will I be seen  
But can my dæmon teach  
My cloudy thought to wash all clean  
In the bright sun of speech.

## *Fairford Nightingales*

THE nightingales at Fairford sing  
As though it were a common thing  
To make the day melodious  
With tones that use to visit us  
Only when thrush and blackbird tare  
Their sleep nor know the moon's awake

These nightingales they sing at noon  
Not lyric lone, but threading June  
With songs of many nightingales  
Till the meridian summer pikes,  
And here by day that spectre will  
Is spending its enchantment still

Nor shily in far woodland bowers  
But walled among the garden flowers,  
The Fairford nightingales are free,  
That so the fabled melody  
Is from the haunted groves of Thrace  
Falling on Fairford market place

O nightingales that leave the night  
To join the melodists of light,  
And leave your coppiced gloom to dare  
The fellowship forsaken there,  
Fresh hours, fresh leaves can dispossess  
Nor spoil your music's loneliness.

## *Beacons*

ONE home together by the fells we knew  
And the blue brakes of England in the spring,  
And we had sires who also heard the bells  
Somewhere along the English meadows We  
Measure one cause, one spirit, and one word,  
And in one pilgrim faith have done our part  
In the slow world's devising Some queer grain  
Of oak out of our soil moulded alike  
The *Mayflower*, the *Revenge* The East has dreams,  
Lotus and temples and the circled fingers,  
Building in contemplation The sun returns  
Yet to the South with Mediterranean song,  
And Provence bears the old Athenian gift,  
And still is heard the praise of troubadours,  
Which is for service, from the Siberian fields  
A sobbing and a moving in the night,  
Where a great lineage communes with the earth,  
Till grief is beauty and the wise revelation  
So from the races life inherits well,  
Stillness, and flight, and faith And we the West,  
Whose tides from Kent to California move,  
Shall we not be the new adventurers ?

America, you were in Shakespeare's word,  
And Milton's, half a prophecy. You were  
An Ironside when Cromwell took the field,  
Drake failed for you, and Nelson is your blood  
And England, little fens and pools and hills,  
Green friendliness of pastures in the dusk,  
White-thorn where thrushes nest, grey thatch and  
stone,

What excellence of you was there that day  
When an unnoted sail put out to sea  
From Plymouth to the England of a dream ?  
At Yorktown did your nobler heart lament  
Among the lost or beat with Washington ?  
And has not Lincoln in your proper tongue  
Your chronicle retold of Runnymede ?  
Then, pledged upon a happier covenant  
Than furnished old crusades, with none to fear  
Of arms or treasons, having for our faith  
To covet not an acre of the world,  
Shall we not be the new adventurers ?  
Come let us get our gospel now by heart  
*One man in grief sets a whole world in tears,*  
*No man is free while one for freedom fears.*

## *England to Czecho-Slovakia*

ONCE—in the day of our meridian song  
And young armadas—on your Bohemian hill  
An older fame suffered an alien wrong  
Where arms again blasphemed a people's will  
And freedom slept among your heroes then,  
Sepulchred on White Mountain, till a theme  
Of the unforgotten music called again,  
And sovereignty was where had been a dream

Fortune, for all our wisdom, we can shape not,  
Being free, we yet are kinsmen of the blind,  
The snares of our own hearts we can escape not,  
Our bravest end is fortitude of mind—  
But Masaryk knows, Bohemia knows, that thence  
The spirit of man walks in magnificence

*May 1920*

# *The Man Who Won the War*

## THE PASSING OF HIS BODY

WHOEVER sinned in this, it was not he,  
While warriors of the tongue defiled our name,  
His was no casual service, nor shall be  
    A casual fame

To-day let all philosophies be dumb.  
And every ardour pause a moment thus,  
To say of him, who back from death has come,  
    “ He died for us ”

Not lonely, though unnamed    Battalioned deep  
With you are ghostly multitudes, who tell  
Nothing, nor claim.   Together to your sleep  
    Pass, and farewell.

*November 11th, 1920*

## *John Keats*

Out of the fevers and dark imaginations  
That were his day, he would turn to the mirrored  
quietness,

The imaged world, ordered from the desires  
Of those his fathers whose fevers were as his own,  
And there he found the peace of understanding  
In Troys and Fairylands and Heaven and Hell

And thence the brain that was John Keats took  
power

To build an imaged world his own, and devise  
Shape for the fevers and dark imaginations,  
Winnowing, moulding all, till all was beauty

Now again we are but blind men, darkly  
Fingering circumstance, sick men with our fevers,  
And his brief time of passion and frustration  
Shines over us, an image for our doctrine,  
A sorrow shaped, a speculation bodied,  
That we the clearer may behold ourselves,  
Because of his bright moons and nightingales

And thus alone shall be the world's salvation

## *Samplers*

IN praise of love, upon my mind  
Samplers I'll make to be,  
As lovers long ago designed  
Emblems of courtesy,  
Threading in warm and frosty wools  
Their wisdom's calendars and rules.

He errs to think those hands were set  
All spinster-like and cold,  
Who spelt a scarlet alphabet,  
And birds of blue and gold,  
And made immortal garden-plots  
Of daisies and forget-me-nots.

The boddins wove an even pace,  
Yet these are lyrics too,  
Breathing of spectral lawn and lace,  
Old ardours to renew,  
For in the corners love would keep  
His fold among the little sheep.

So I will samplers make as well,  
Nor shall the colours lack  
In shining characters to tell  
Your lovely Zodiac,  
And all your kisses there and words  
Shall spring again as flowers and birds

## *To Waste Not*

UNDER the snow  
Are roots to blow  
So soon with daffodils,  
And buds prepare  
The cowslips' wear,  
Buried below the hills.

Within the brake  
So soon shall wake  
The building birds to sing,  
And folded now  
In every bough  
Are bridals of the Spring.

Shall Love be lost  
In tardy frost  
When other flowers are free ?  
Or less than birds  
Shake happy words  
As blossoms from the tree ?

O Love, make haste  
Or time will waste  
The habit of your lute,  
Prepare your string  
To play the Spring,  
Or be for ever mute

## *The Bond*

O FAR and well my gentleness  
Has walked among your coverts green,  
With your still wisdom to possess  
My weary brain and gather in  
My thought from madness, as the bells  
Do beggared flocks from stormy fells.

Now mute and careful shall I live  
Your constant alien to be ?  
Or, as the honest fugitive,  
Lend love but sad security ?  
O love, be brave, and bid me go  
In freedom still your bondfellow.

## *Decision*

HAD we our bodies to provide  
With rule for an eternal date  
Well should our intellectual pride  
Upon the years for witness wait,  
Holding our adversary's will  
But heresy for time to kill

And here where but a mood goes by  
And we are folded from the sun,  
In marriage of the grave to lie,  
And every argument is done,  
Each burning hour of argument  
Is but in wrangling folly spent

I will no cunning words devise ,  
Once told, I can but let you be  
In your own patient counsel wise  
Of my love's simple honesty,  
While somewhere is an acre sown  
That shall instruct us, bone by bone

## *Surety*

Love is not dead  
We have cherished it too long,  
We have planted it too deep,  
And we have watered well  
The roots and branches spread  
In earth and airy song.  
Love has a word to keep,  
A word to tell.

Yes, that is all  
I know behind the fume  
Of this poor difference  
Love waits, nor grieves too much,  
Till the old voices call,  
And sings upon the gloom  
Too sure an eloquence  
For death to touch.

Too long a date  
Has love between us plied  
For that long trodden path  
To wear in weeds or rain,

Too long in love's debate  
Have we been satisfied,  
For jealousies of wrath  
To blind the brain

# *Union*

## I

SUPPOSE me dead ; think of the man you made,  
A moment, but as earth, unbreathing more,  
His garments folded, and his reckoning paid  
Of love, and faith, and fame , then, as before  
A chronicle all done, with *finis* writ,  
Ask if the man you made had truly been  
More worth your pride and daily watching wit  
Had fear of you one passage cancelled clean.

Would you not say, serenely gospelled then,  
“ I taught him faith, I bade his word be said  
Fearing no challenge nor reproof of men ;  
And had the happy courage that I bred  
Once brought me chill obedience for wage,  
This chronicle had been a poorer page ” ?

## II

For, dear, I can but serve you at the rate  
That is my heart’s occasion, that is all ,  
If I deny myself and with you wait,  
It is not I, however you may call ,

Something of me must go, if I deny,  
Though in denial shall be with you still  
A body walking and a watchful eye,  
The patient service of an impoverished will

For if the love that loved, and chose, and came  
Ever again to you, nor ever found  
Estrangement in far absences, nor blame  
For pilgrimage to other Edens bound,  
Should know one beauty by your will denied,  
Thenceforth how should old faith be satisfied ?

### III

But when you bid me go as beauty calls,  
Knowing that my desire could follow none  
But fair vocation, and that intervals  
In honest love are still love's errands done,  
When you upon my embarkation wait,  
And cry, "O Keel ! forth in pursuit of spring,  
All Archipelagos to navigate,  
You are my ship, and thus your voyaging"—

Then nothing lets between your sovran pride  
And all my kingdom, nor is poor pretence

That over all my fortunes you preside  
When half my levies are rebellious pence ;  
Then do you govein that your craft began,  
A man, and not the shadow of a man

## *Against Treason*

ALL you have been you can be in this hour,  
My need will be my need for evermore  
Time cannot steal your excellence of power,  
Nor stain the love that liveried you before,  
If you shall but your wonted honour keep,  
And daily meet me with quick truth of old,  
And let nor change nor dark alloy nor sleep  
Betray your former witness of its mould

But if in other features you present  
The woman that I loved, how should I make  
Renewal daily of an old content  
I knew for her whose covenant you break ?  
Though you yourself betrayed your elder pride  
I would not in your treason be allied

## *For This Moment*

LET me, who am your poet (nor thereby  
Think me less yours that other worlds I sing  
Than your sweet universe) now let me try  
Persuasion such as in an antique spring  
Pan among cowslip meadows might have thus  
Found with his shepherd's daughter prosperous :

“ O love, why should you ever look beyond  
This gladness into past or future time,  
Accusing in your mind the heart now fond,  
With phantom treason or ungendered crime ?  
For mortal ever is the lover's kiss  
And mocks who claims diviner emphasis.

“ But one day and another day shall come  
New kisses, love, with each its sovran power  
Bidding to-morrow's history be dumb  
And yesterday's but a forgotten hour,  
Fold up your fears, put your sad fancies by,  
Lest in complaint our sweet occasion die.

“ Lest in complaint of sad example grow  
But barren hours to-morrow from to-day,  
Love lives but by renewal, and can show  
Constant succession never, therefore pay  
Proudly the charges of this present need,  
Or bid me sound on other shores my reed ”

# *Death and a Lover*

DEATH    A LOVER    HIS DEAD MISTRESS ON A BIER

## LOVER

BLIND, silly Death, although you nothing care  
For my despair,  
Could you not see my darling was too fair  
For earth to lose ?

## DEATH

The wit, when love comes to so quick a close,  
Distempered goes  
No day but earth shall build bright limbs as  
those,  
For me to bruise.

## LOVER

Then, though the world is tearless for her sake,  
Some pity take  
Upon my dark immortal sorrow, wake  
This pretty one.

DEATH

Ten thousand years ago a lover cried,  
" Ah, let betide  
What may, my grief must ever more abide "  
His grief is done

LOVER

She might have borne me children straight and  
strong,  
To plough the long  
Furrows, and make their ploughing in a song  
Articulate

DEATH

Still shall the green blades break upon the spring,  
And song shall bring  
Her liberty to every captive thing,  
Early or late

LOVER

Though, Death, you govern me in argument,  
Still goes unspent  
My grief, my grief How shall I be content,  
O King of Fear ?

DEATH

I neither pity nor console. Farewell  
Bearers, the bell  
Calls you Alone his sorrow let him tell.  
She will not hear.

## *The Pledge*

WHEN love is bright and whole again,  
I'll sing like the bee's weather,  
I'll set my colours up again  
Like the cock-pheasant's feather,  
I'll find a note to make me one  
With lyric birds that sing the sun

I'll fill my songs with palmer's buds  
And sprigs of thorn for Whitsunday,  
And they shall dance as willow rods,  
And shine with garlands of the may,  
I'll be a theme that takes the spring  
From bushes where the blackbirds sing

I'll walk among my sheep again  
And turn my steps to numbers,  
When love is bright and whole again  
And fear has gone to slumbers,  
With wings again and flowers and stars  
To be my coloured calendars

## *Nunc Dimitis*

I HAVE seen the plover's wing,  
And the grey willow bough,  
The sandy bubbling spring,  
The hawk over the plough,  
And now, instructed so,  
I am content to go

Songs of the lake and wood  
Of water and wind I have heard,  
And I have understood  
According to Thy word.  
What then is now to learn ?  
Seaward, O soul, return.

Though I shall walk again  
Nor spring nor winter field,  
Yet surely in my brain  
Are spring and winter sealed.  
Earth you have shown me all,  
I am ready for the call.

## *The Providence*

I do not ask, and yet you give,  
You give, and yet without design,—  
Only some wonder, fugitive  
In you from all the world, is mine

You do not bid me serve, and still  
I am all service for your sake,  
And gift by gift my daily will  
For me does a new kingdom make

## *Covenant*

I WOULD no sweeter treasure know  
From your dear love than I can give,  
And in such peace as you bestow  
I pray for you to live.

Star to rejoicing star shall move  
And flower on happy flower shall shine,  
But all the sorrows of our love,  
Let these be wholly mine.

Yet that is treason For I bear  
No prouder heart than is your own,  
And you would scorn the love would share  
Delight and grieve alone.

## *Persuasion*

Then I asked     Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so  
make it so?

He replied   'All Poets believe that it does and in ages of  
imagination this firm persuasion removed mountains   but many  
are not capable of a firm persuasion of anything

BLAKE's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

### I

At any moment love unheralded  
Comes, and is king   Then as, with a fall  
Of frost, the buds upon the hawthorn spread  
Are withered in untimely burial,  
So love, occasion gone, his crown puts by,  
And as a beggar walks unfriended ways,  
With but remembered beauty to defy  
The frozen sorrows of unsceptred days  
Or in that later travelling he comes  
Upon a bleak oblivion, and tells  
Himself, again, again, forgotten tombs  
Are all now that love was, and blindly spells  
His royal state of old a glory cursed,  
Saying "I have forgot," and that's the worst

IF we should part upon that one embrace,  
And set far courses ever, each from each,  
With all our treasure but a fading face  
And little ghostly syllables of speech,  
Should beauty's moment never be renewed,  
And moons on moons look out for us in vain,  
And each but whisper from a solitude  
To hear but echoes of a lonely pain,  
Still in a world that fortune cannot change  
Should walk those two that once were you and I,  
Those two that once when moon and stars were  
strange  
Poets above us in an April sky,  
Heard a voice falling on the midnight sea,  
Mute, and for ever, but for you and me

## III

THIS nature, this great flood of life, this cheat  
That uses us as baubles for her coat,  
Takes love, that should be nothing but the beat  
Of blood for its own beauty, by the throat,  
Saying, you are my servant and shall do  
My purposes, or utter bitterness  
Shall be your wage, and nothing come to you  
But stammering tongues that never can confess  
Undaunted then in answer here I cry,  
" You wanton, that control the hand of him  
Who masquerades as wisdom in a sky  
Where holy, holy, sing the cherubim,  
I will not pay one penny to your name  
Though all my body crumble into shame "

WOMAN, I once had whimpered at your hand,  
Saying that all the wisdom that I sought  
Lay in your brain, that you were as the sand  
Should cleanse the muddy mirrors of my thought,  
I should have read in you the character  
Of oracles that quick a thousand lays,  
Looked in your eyes, and seen accounted there  
Solomons legioned for bewildered praise.  
Now have I learnt love as love is. I take  
Your hand, and with no inquisition learn  
All that your eyes can tell, and that's to make  
A little reckoning and brief, then turn  
Away, and in my heart I hear a call,  
“I love, I love, I love” ; and that is all.

WHEN all the hungry pain of love I bear,  
And in poor lightless thought but burn and burn,  
And wit goes hunting wisdom everywhere,  
Yet can no word of revelation learn,  
When endlessly the scales of yea and nay  
In dreadful motion fall and rise and fall,  
When all my heart in sorrow I could pay  
Until at last were left no tear at all,  
Then if with tame or subtle argument  
Companions come and draw me to a place  
Where words are but the tappings of content,  
And life spreads all her garments with a grace,  
I curse that ease, and hunger in my heart  
Back to my pain and lonely to depart

Not anything you do can make you mine,  
For enterprise with equal charity  
In duty as in love elect will shine,  
The constant slave of mutability.  
Nor can your words for all their honey breath  
Outsing the speech of many an older rhyme,  
And though my ear deliver them from death  
One day or two, it is so little time.  
Nor does your beauty in its excellence  
Excel a thousand in the daily sun,  
Yet must I put a period to pretence,  
And with my logic's catalogue have done,  
For act and word and beauty are but keys  
To unlock the heart, and you, dear love, are thes.

NEVER the heart of spring had trembled so  
As on that day when first in Paradise  
We went afoot as novices to know  
For the first time what blue was in the skies,  
What fresher green than any in the grass,  
And how the sap goes beating to the sun,  
And tell how on the clocks of beauty pass  
Minute by minute till the last is done  
But not the new birds singing in the brake,  
And not the buds of our discovery,  
The deeper blue, the wilder green, the ache  
For beauty that we shadow as we see,  
Made heaven, but we, as love's occasion brings,  
Took these, and made them Paradisal things

THE lilacs offer beauty to the sun,  
Throbbing with wonder as eternally  
For sad and happy lovers they have done  
With the first bloom of summer in the sky,  
Yet they are newly spread in honour now,  
Because, for every beam of beauty given  
Out of that clustering heart, back to the bough  
My love goes beating, from a greater heaven  
So be my love for good or sorry luck  
Bound, it has virtue on this April eve  
That shall be there for ever when they pluck  
Lilacs for love And though I come to grieve  
Long at a frosty tomb, there still shall be  
My happy lyric in the lilac tree.

WHEN they make silly question of my love,  
And speak to me of danger and disdain,  
And look by fond old argument to move  
My wisdom to docility again,  
When to my prouder heart they set the pride  
Of custom and the gossip of the street,  
And show me figures of myself beside  
A self diminished at their judgment seat,  
Then do I sit as in a drowsy pew  
To hear a priest expounding th' heavenly will,  
Defiling wonder that he never knew  
With stolen words of measured good and ill,  
For to the love that knows their counselling,  
Out of my love contempt alone I bring

Not love of you is most that I can bring,  
Since what I am to love you is the test,  
And should I love you more than any thing  
You would but be of idle love possessed,  
A mere love wandering in appetite,  
Counting your glories and yet bringing none,  
Finding in you occasions of delight,  
A thief of payment for no service done.  
But when of labouring life I make a song  
And bring it you, as that were my reward,  
To let what most is me to you belong,  
Then do I come of high possessions lord,  
And loving life more than my love of you  
I give you love more excellently true.

WHAT better tale could any lover tell  
When age or death his reckoning shall write  
Than thus, "Love taught me only to rebel  
Against these things,—the thieving of delight  
Without return, the gospellers of fear  
Who, loving, yet deny the truth they bear,  
Sad suited lusts with lecherous hands to smear  
The cloth of gold they would but dare not wear  
And love gave me great knowledge of the trees,  
And singing birds, and earth with all her flowers,  
Wisdom I knew and righteousness in these,  
I lived in their atonement all my hours,  
Love taught me how to beauty's eye alone  
The secret of the lying heart is known "

THIS then at last, we may be wiser far  
Than love, and put his folly to our measure,  
Yet shall we learn, poor wizards that we are,  
That love chimes not nor motions at our pleasure  
We bid him come, and light an eager fire,  
And he goes down the road without debating,  
We cast him from the house of our desire,  
And when at last we leave he will be waiting  
And in the end there is no folly but this,  
To counsel love out of our little learning,  
For still he knows where rotten timber is,  
And where the boughs for the long winter burning,  
And when life needs no more of us at all,  
Love's word will be the last that we recall.

## *Prelude*

Though black the night, I know upon the sky,  
A little paler now, if clouds were none,  
The stars would be Husht now the thickets lie,  
And now the birds are moving one by one,—  
A note—and now from bush to bush it goes—  
A prelude—now victorious light along  
The west will come till every brimble glows  
With wash of sunlit dew shaken in song  
Shaken in song, O heart, be ready now,  
Cold in your night, be ready now to sing  
Dawn as it wakes the sleeping bird on bough  
Shall summon you to instant reckoning,—  
She is your dawn, O heart,—sing, till the night  
Of death shall come, the gospel of her light

## *David and Jonathan*

AND Jonathan too had honour in his heart,  
Jonathan who with an armour-bearer went  
Alone by Michmash to the Philistines,  
And met a spray of swords because of courage  
That made him single greater than a host.  
Jonathan too had known his battles, dared  
At any hour the coming of death, because  
In twilight silence he had walked with God,  
Read Him in blossoms and the mountain brooks,  
And learnt that death, well known, can alter  
nothing

He was a brown man, burnt with love of summer,  
His young beard curled, and russet as the eyes  
That looked on life, and feared it, yet were master,  
Because they knew the tyranny they feared,  
Measured it, learnt it, gazed it into nothing.

And now he watched the boy, the son of Jesse,  
David with hair like maples in October,  
And skin that women loving coveted,  
David with eyes that often by the sheepfolds  
Had looked through leaves up to the folds of heaven,

And seeing them crammed with golden fleece of stars,  
Had known how the blood can run because of beauty  
Jonathan watched him take the armour off  
Given by Saul, and choose the bright smooth pebbles,  
And walk out from the Israelitish throng  
Into the field against the Philistine giant  
Watching, he snatched his sword and cried to Saul,  
"Bid him come back This murder must not be"  
And as he spoke, he knew the words were treason,  
His heart alone in all the world was sure  
That David was the Lord's appointed arm,  
To meet this bulk of dirt, this giant fear  
Brandishing out of the loathly camps of evil  
And before Saul could answer, he put down  
The sword, and said, "I love him Let him go"

But the words, I love him, were not for his father  
Saul,  
Hardly Jonathan knowing he spoke them out  
But as he looked on David love was there,  
Waking from that in David that he himself  
A little was, and always greatly shiping

Himself towards, so that his name was spoken  
 Famously in Saul's kingdom. It was courage,  
 The clean heart, undivided in its doing,  
 The purpose that, being bodied in the brain,  
 Thenceforth knew every trickling argument  
 That fell from tongues of persuading circumstance,  
 As lures of evil ever threatening life,  
 That Jonathan loved above all enterprise  
 He knew, or the rarer man within him knew,  
 That once your yea in holy meditation  
 Had shaped itself in the perfect syllable,  
 Thenceforth no nay from any other tongue  
 Or wise or passionate or masterful,  
 Could be listened to without the shame of sin  
 Corrupting all your constancy for ever  
 He knew the curse of good betraying good,  
 Till both in bleak irresolution fall  
 And all his years was Jonathan's anguish only  
 To keep this tillage of his wisdom clean

Since boyhood he had known Philistia  
 For the black thing it was, a plague opposed  
 Always against the loveliness of Israel,  
 And when his father Saul was anointed king  
 By Samuel in Ramah, then Jonathan knew

How all the lessons of his youth had been  
To fit him for the striking of the men  
Who profaned beauty and let the soul be blind  
And he was diligent in bronze and arms,  
And kept his body supple, and his eye  
Keen, and the coming of his hooves was thunder,  
Wherever battle fell He bore a flame,  
Zealous and pure, in the heavens of his mind,  
To serve and to instruct Aye, to instruct—  
There was the biting blemish, as we shall see

Philistia was foul, and Jonathan knew,  
And the voice of God within him was plain and  
constant  
To strike and strike unwearying to the end  
And then the poor, precise, infirmity  
That loads good minds with ever seeming virtue,  
Until they cast their treasure to the dust,  
Crept on him, wound about the gleaming truth  
That was his one foundation Day by day  
He was resolved, and then the grain of doubt  
Would come to hurt the riding of his thought,  
And break the level balance that it had  
Was then the Philistine mere black ? That day  
Jonathan's arm half paused upon the blow,

And evil went a little scatheless off.  
Surely the worst even of adversaries  
Had somewhere beams that pointed to salvation,  
And hasty judgment might not be the will  
Of an all-seeing Lord ? Then would the vengeance  
Falter, and stay, and Jonathan's battle failed.  
And always then was bitterness and reproach  
In the night watches when upon his couch  
He looked on the stars studding his little window  
Before sleep came. Then he would speak again  
The word that single was his valiance,  
His only truth, his warrant as a man,  
And once again Philistia was doomed  
Then for a season clean the stroke and sure  
That Jonathan drove, and black was known for  
black,  
Till slowly as before would mount and mount  
Scruple on scruple, as was not he himself  
A little black sometimes, or plainly wicked ?  
And should the wicked man not be redeemed ?  
Merely destruction surely was no answer,  
Since yet the wickedness must wander somewhere ?  
How should he say, I, Jonathan of Israel  
Am good, and you the Philistine are cursed,  
Since in that face was something that had been

Learnt from the buds and corn and frozen hills  
That he himself had known for seals of God ?  
And would not his power on Israel increase,  
Take on a loftier authority,  
If to his famous arms he could add a tale  
Of counsel working in the hearts of men,  
Moving them to a finer charity,  
A little pity for offence ? And so  
Instruction like a worm was at his roots,  
And pride of virtue made Jonathan forget  
Then sometimes as he knew himself betrayed  
He would cry upon his spirit in the night—

I, Jonathan, who know  
The processes of God  
Moving within me,  
Turn aside to my idols of desire  
He has taught me the ways  
Of Philistine cruelty He  
Shows me the bad man toiling to the ruin  
Of beauty and the free spirit on earth,  
And has equipped me for the establishment  
Of His will in this battle, and I fail  
I am a leaf spinning about the wind,  
Who have been shown the ways of steadfastness

O Israel, I have heard  
My dedication made  
To your sweet service by the voice of Him,  
And I betray  
That wisdom, that great simpleness of  
wisdom,  
Inventing in my brain  
Fantastic argument  
As though God's mind  
Had missed the brighter pools  
That I alone could visit and gaze into.  
He tells me, and I hear  
Voices not His  
Knowing, I question. And I am ashamed.  
So Jonathan saw walking at his side  
Always a shadow that was his own denial.

And now was April mirrored in the plumes  
Of ravens and the green of the young wheat,  
And dusky ewes with white lambs in the sun  
Lay in the valley plain between the hosts  
Of Israel and Philistia And on this day  
Jonathan learnt utter reproach, and love.  
There on the plain Goliath stood alone,  
Poised in his mighty bulk, with black locks flowing,

A handsbreadth taller even than Saul the king  
Who shouldered it above the men of Israel,  
And beat his words of sure defiance out,  
Ringing across the windless noon And all  
Israel heard, and fear was on them, knowing,  
If thus the issue, how it should prevail  
And Jonathan in the tent of Saul his father,  
Watched, and his blood was quick, and in his mind  
He strove against the last of doubt And then  
The young man David stood before them, bidden  
By Saul, who heard one say, "There is a boy  
New come from tending sheep in Bethlehem,  
And seeks the king" And David stood before them,  
And asked no leave, but said, "There was a cause  
It bade me come, and I will fight with him"  
And Saul denied, but David did not hear  
Denial, saying, "The wild beasts of the field  
I with my hand have slain at the fold's gate  
And this is mine to do" And David stood,  
Greater than argument while Saul armed him there  
And Jonathan saw the purpose that he was not,  
Glowing and bodied, and his love was born

Then David flung the armour off, and said,  
"I am David, and I know not these strange arms

I must go out as I have always been,  
Not girt with new occasion. It is I,  
David the shepherd that am David still,  
And I know nothing of your spears and plate.  
A sheepskin have I worn, and in my hand  
A sling, and pebbles taken from the brook  
Now shall I go, content that God has watched me  
So habited and armed through all my youth  
Should I pretend another David now,  
I should meet this man with neither honour nor  
hope.

If I am sent against the Philistine  
Out of God's anger, and I know it is so,  
It is not one the chosen of Saul's hosts,  
But I, David of Bethlehem must go,  
The son of Jesse, and keeper of his flocks ”

Almost the tears were seen in Jonathan's eyes,  
Because of David's words, of which he knew  
The poor ghosts hiding somewhere in his own heart.  
And then he spoke his fear, and then the words,  
Resting his sword, “ I love him. Let him go.”  
And David stept out of the emerald light  
That played up from the grass floor of the tent,  
Into the full flood of the April noon,

And walked a little way, and those two stood  
Parted a hundred paces, the man of terror,  
Hewn massy and with shock of builded limbs,  
And David moulded like a sea boy risen  
From eaves of music where the water spins  
Wet sand into the shapes of flowing flowers,  
David with limbs all bright with the sun's tones,  
And ruddy locks curling with youth and light,  
His body all alert on steady loins,  
Clean spun of flesh that knew the winter snows,  
And mellow pools of summer, and the dews  
Dropping among the crocuses of dawn  
His saddle straps bound ankles as a girl's,  
And fluttering to his knees the sheepskin hung,  
Cloaking one shoulder, while the other gleamed  
And there he paused, the sling in his right hand,  
His left hand fingering the pouch of pebbles,  
While Israel fearing murmured, and the hosts  
Of Philistine derision rocked the noon  
Then did Goliath cry, "Am I a dog,  
For a boy's whipping? Have you not a man,  
That you would send a cleaner up of crumbs  
From the queen's table? Come then, and be  
broken,  
For birds to find you and the dogs at night?"

And Jonathan heard Philistia shout again,  
And David, like a flame unwinded, stood  
Quivering at the cry, and laid a stone  
In the sling's fold, and cast his staff, and ran,  
Fleet as the king bird gliding under leaves,  
Towards Goliath And a giant spear  
Swung from the Philistine hand, and forty paces  
Sang in the air and brushed the flying sheepskin,  
And sudden David's feet were planted firm,  
Locked on the earth, and circling in the sun  
The tight thong flashed and loosened, and the stone  
Smote the Philistine wrath above the eyes,  
And the day was clouded from him, and he fell  
.

Then Isiael spared not And, when night was  
come,

Jonathan sent for David to his tent,  
And those two sat while the yellow torches burned,  
And Jonathan spoke and said, " David, my brother,  
To-day you have made a story that shall be  
For ever fruitful in the heart of man.

This day is David's But of this day I too  
Share, not in the honour, but in the harvesting,  
Or the harvesting I think is wholly mine.  
Shall I speak on ? " And David said, " Speak on."

Then Jonathan—" This morning there was a man,  
And it was Jonathan, who many years  
Had gone snared in a purpose not his own,  
That is, not truly mine Always I knew,  
Walking by that self I said was honest,  
Another self, the true self, in a shadow,  
Or at an angle that my eyes refused  
I was a proud man, David, very virtuous,  
Or, in fairness to myself, desiring virtue,  
Truly desiring it, I may say that  
And yet even in that desire there moved  
A lie, for I knew the virtue of my desire  
Was something tainted No—I knew it not,  
But that other self walking beside me knew it,  
And whispered, I knew, a thing that I would not  
hear

Always it whispered, as I stood alone,  
I said, in subtle thought among all Israel  
God had spoken to me, David, that the Philistine  
Was evil, evil, that was all God said,  
And bade me strike as a man by God assured  
But the man to whom God spoke I put aside,  
The still self walking, whispering, in the shadow  
And I, the Jonathan of daily light,  
Tempered the word of God, I tempered it—

I who should be God's outcast doing so.  
I counted evil twenty different ways,  
And none of them plain evil. I diced with God,  
And the dice fell as often to my hand,  
It seemed, as His, but falling so the whisper  
Was ever shadowed at my ear, unheard.  
And ever as this new intelligence,  
This pride of thought, crept over me and filled  
My dawn and noon and sleep, a hunger grew,  
A dreadful hunger for that self denied,  
And every word I spoke for righteousness  
Turned bitter on my lips, because I knew  
That every word was righteousness undone  
Such was the man this morning when you came,  
Who from the king's tent watched you, David.

Then

Change and completion and I know not what  
Of heavenly fulfilment fell upon me.  
Not from myself, nor of my own devising,  
But marvellously spoken in a space  
Of golden light that glowed about the form  
Of a boy standing in my father's tent.  
Quite suddenly the thing I lacked was there,  
The shadow whispering at my side had gone  
And stood there bodied in you, David, brother,

O dear young shepherd from your sheepfolds called—  
Nay Jonathan myself it was there standing,  
Or barren branches of myself in flower,  
My jailored thought flooded with light of song  
And in that moment nothing was between  
Your soul and mine, and knowing you, I loved,  
Since love is understanding, and must come  
When mind looks on the presence of very mind  
I loved you, David, and I love, and ever—  
Because my mind, even in one day's passing,  
Has learnt you as no years could better learn—  
My love is fixed upon you And, moreover,  
Since from this hour I must for ever know  
Some element of me lodged sole in you,  
Some certainty in you alone to be  
Among my weeds the patient husbandman,  
I must in your love prosper or not at all  
Now therefore, David, let a covenant be  
Between us from this day, for the heart knows ”

David and Jonathan under the long torches  
Were silent then And David's eyes were fixed  
Long upon Jonathan, as eyes may sometimes look  
On eyes, and see no face, looking beyond  
Into unimaged life, into the brain

Moving behind the circumstance of flesh,  
Eyes that to-morrow passing might hardly know  
The mere face that to-night they gaze upon  
And Jonathan having spoken, waited there  
While David searched him slowly with still eyes  
Then David rose, and drew the tent-fold back,  
And looked upon the stars of Palestine  
Long, and a mallow moon ; and Jonathan waited.  
Then David came again, and spoke, " I too,  
Standing this morning in your father's tent,  
Knew that a life unwonted was near me there  
And now you have spoken, and the love you say,  
I know, and as your will is so is mine  
Something I am for you that none can be  
Let it be so, but all is not then said.  
This morning when I smote the Philistine,  
I was God's purpose, that I must believe.  
But purpose only is not all of God,  
Hearing you now, I know it is not all.  
When first I saw you I did not know it then  
Only, facing the Philistine, something new  
A moment marked me, and unnoted went,  
No touch of it upon my will. But now  
I have heard you speak, and what it was I know  
You loved me, Jonathan, seeing, as I stood,

That shadowy self of you of which you tell me  
Suddenly living fearless in the sun  
That is your reaping of my field, and I  
Glory to give it you But were that all,  
Proud to be loved, I should not love again  
But now I know for me is too a reaping  
Your shadow to my living purpose leaps,  
And that is wonderful But as you spoke  
Some David hidden from the man that slew  
Goliath listened also, and is now  
With us for ever And he that wrought this life  
Is you, Jonathan of doubts and speculation,  
The man who sits there plainly now, the mere  
Jonathan when the shadow is forgotten  
Now do I know my purpose magnified,  
Sure as of old, but learning in its flight,  
Of pity and the sad heart of man from you,  
And how the jealous and unmerciful,  
Being stricken down, are but poor sorrows too  
So, Jonathan my brother, as you take,  
So do you give, and in us now shall be  
The perfect whole of purpose and compassion,  
And resolution without pride of heart  
Now therefore will I make the covenant,  
Knowing that never more can you or I

Without this love be better than a tale  
Of corrupting seed and fallow-lands unsown.”

Now Jonathan rose and put the torches out,  
And a grey beam of dawn was on those two.  
And Jonathan took his outer garment off,  
Which was the king’s son’s, and robed David there,  
And he took the sword that Saul had given him,  
Belted in gold and cased in figured steel,  
And it hung on David’s loins And Jonathan said,  
“Who fails in this, that is the last betrayal,  
The quenching of the holy spirit of God.”  
And David said, “So be it.” And they embraced,  
And kissed. And David went into the dawn  
And Jonathan watched until the day was full.

## *The Maid of Naaman's Wife*

THAT was the proud woman, Naaman's wife,  
Basking at noon under the Syrian fans,  
While Naaman, the leprous mighty captain,  
Proud glowing flesh now silver-skinned and tainted,  
Walked in contagion here and there, apart  
His wife, the unblemished Naaman in her mind,  
The man who, coming with the spoils and shouts,  
Had made a hundred triumphs hers, when all  
The Syrian women courted her for that,  
Now saw in the pestilent limbs shame and reproach,  
Some treachery that made her, who was mate  
Of Syria's pride, bondwoman of a leper  
She must nurse her blame, since he was Naaman  
still,  
With an old honour paid by steadfastness,  
The mark of Syria's compassion Black  
Thoughts were her only payment for betrayal,  
But in secret she could play them without pity,—  
Let the fans beat, they could not beguile her from  
that

And Naaman had loved her, but not now,

Knowing the uses that his love had been,  
How given for her to squander it in pride.

        . . . . .  
Syria out of Israel had brought  
Captives, and among them one, a maid,  
A little maid, just troubled with the touch  
Of womanhood upon her body and thought,  
And she served Naaman's wife, a lonely girl,  
To answer bidding, and covet little tones  
Of kindness that she heard go to and fro,  
But not for her. She trembled as she stood  
At the proud woman's couch, because a fault  
In orders done meant scolding and even rods  
And she had but two joys One, to remember  
A Galilean town, and the blue waters  
That washed the pebbles that she knew so well,  
Yellow in sunlight, or frozen in the moon,  
A little curve of beach, where she would walk  
At any hour with an old silver man,  
Her father's father, her sole companion,  
Who told her tales of Moses and the prophets  
That lived in the old days And of that time  
She had but now poor treasures of the mind,  
Little seclusions when, the day's work done,  
She made thought into prayer before she slept ,

These, and a faded gown that she had brought  
Into captivity, patterned with sprigs of thyme,  
And blades of wheat, and little curling shells,  
And signs of heaven figured out in stars,  
Made by a weaver that her grandsire knew,  
A gift on some thanksgiving She might not  
wear it,

Being suited as became a slave, but often  
At night she would spread it in her loneliness,  
And think how finely she too might be drest,  
As finely as any proud woman of them all,  
If the God of Israel had not visited her  
Surely for sin, though she could not remember  
Thus one joy was And then the Lord Naaman,  
This wonder soiled, this pitiful great captain  
Forbidden all that he had so proudly been—  
To worship him, that was her other joy  
When the dusk came, and the city fell to silence,  
And out of his poor banishment he would walk,  
She followed him, knowing the very hour,  
And all her heart was flooded through with pity,  
Because she knew the leprosy left still  
A Naaman untainted and lovely  
Then in her mind was the proud woman a loathing,  
Who dared to waste a marvel such as this,

The right in the world's knowledge so to love.  
O pitiful evil blasting so great a flesh,  
Walling a spirit so governing itself  
In spite of desolation. A maid's thought thus  
Knew how the frames of mastery can suffer.

. . . . .

Sometimes at night when not even lepers walked,  
Solitary in the Syrian meadows she  
Would wander in the old perplexity  
That the moon makes of love. Never, she knew,  
Could any adoration that she brought  
Touch even the Lord Naaman's banishment,  
The Naaman fallen from the time when even  
Great ladies dare not speak the thing they felt.  
She was nothing, or the world could never know  
If she was more than nothing, a maid to bind  
Tresses for beauty that was not her own  
And yet she knew that she had beauty too,  
A little hermit beauty that might spend  
Royally if it dare and a man would speak,  
Royally, Naaman, but he could not hear  
But still for all the silence of her lips,  
And heart with promise nothing known, she loved  
Loved the sad leper walking in the dusk,  
Loved the great lord, loved even his leprosy,

Since by it he came a little down to her,  
Loved him, and knew that her love was the sum  
Of all that loving, and must be But even so,  
She knew her love an honester thing than any  
That the proud woman had O moon, she thought,  
Could you not make me truly tell this love,  
This love pulsing along my blood and brain,  
As midnight surges going through the sky ?  
And long she pondered how she best might serve

Then one day when the fans moved, and she stood  
Ministering with her perfumes at the couch,  
Her mistress, with eyes that meant the thought  
was nothing,  
Said, " Is it not grievous that my lord goes thus ? "  
And the maid felt the colour at her throat  
Flow round her neck and flood up to her temples,  
But knowing, feared not, or put her fear aside,  
And said, " Would God my lord were in Samaria,  
To seek Elisha there, a prophet, lady,  
Whom God hath taught to cure whom he will  
cure "  
She spoke, and the bright bowl trembled in her  
hands,  
And fear because of her words made the tongue dry

As the woman looked with still cold eyes upon her.  
But the word passed from lip to lip, and the king  
Heard it, and sent for Naaman and said,  
“A girl among the slaves that you brought in  
From Israel has spoken a strange thing,  
Of one Elisha, a prophet whom they obey,  
Saying that he could bid the blemish off  
That is cheating Syria of her proudest man.  
Now therefore journey to him, and I will send  
Word to Israel’s king, that he shall bless  
Favours from us in whom his fortune lies,  
Bidding him call this prophet to your cause  
Go, and the love of Syria go with you.”

. . . . .

Then Naaman with his servants went at dawn,  
And Naaman’s wife saw how again might come  
Her mastery among the women of Syria.  
Yet was the little maid her hatred now,  
Lest of her word should come this resurrection.  
And Naaman went, and Israel’s king was glad,  
Because of Syria’s favour, and sent down  
The hill to where Elisha lived among  
Farmers of flax and goatherds and a few  
Unhappy men who brought their sorrow to God,  
Asking his mercy on the Syrian lord.

And Naaman stood before the prophet of Israel,  
And told his grief And Elisha looked upon him,  
Measured his faith, and bade him bathe his body  
Seven times in the river of Jordan, and be  
Whole And Naaman questioned, and was wrath,  
As was not any river of Damascus  
Purer than Jordan, and in more virtue flowing ?  
But, little, his servants said, was this to do,  
And, as persuasion led him, he went down  
And seven times let Jordan cover him,  
And came with a clean body as of old,  
A strong man with the tides of blood before him,  
With equal limbs for all the spirit could dare,  
And into Syria he sang upon his riding

And tidings came to the Syrian king of this,  
Heralding a Naaman mightier than ever,  
With clean flesh and a wisdom all matured,  
And all the city rang upon his coming,  
The king and his estate, people and priests,  
And soldiers glad of their old captain again,  
And matrons with their girls, and the rich mer-  
chants,  
All shouted Naaman, Naaman, through the streets  
And Naaman's wife stood at the king's right hand,

Her slave-borne canopy coloured and spangled,  
While the great fans beat upon her pride again,  
And Naaman in plumes and plate and mail  
Again was master of the Syrian hosts. ,

Afar, beyond the barriers of the streets,  
Pressing among the crowd for a moment's seeing,  
The Israelitish maid, between her duties,  
Watched with a proud flush beating down her  
limbs.

And shyly she had on a faded gown,  
Patterned with sprigs of thyme and blades of wheat,  
And paling stars and little cuiling shells  
And as the shouting rose, she watched in silence,  
With trembling lips, and Naaman passed by her,  
And her hands moved towards him, and fell down,  
Then stole upon her bosom, as they would ease  
The aching beauty of her loneliness  
And there unnoted as he passed she stood,  
With not a thought from all that world upon her.  
Only, when service came again, she saw  
A glowing hatred in the proud woman's eyes  
And in the night she thought of it, and wept,  
But not for any hatred were her tears.

## *Lake Winter*

FULL summer dusk was round him as he stood  
On the hill-top, over the calling sheep  
Drifting along the pastured downs The moon  
Far off was rising from the Sussex sea  
Above him, building up into the sky,  
Black, and with pointing sails now skeletoned,  
A windmill gathered strays of evening wind  
Whispering through the splitting timbers Still  
The setting sun washed with a fuller gold  
The golden sheaves patterned upon a cone  
Of downland by him farther from the sea  
So still, he seemed a thing woven of earth,  
A life rooted and fixed as were the oaks  
Locked in the soil, their bases webbed with fleece  
Of sheltering ewes, he watched across the valley,  
And the hour passed, and the black mill grew and  
grew,  
And then a light came in a far window  
Of a grey farm cresting the hill beyond,  
And sudden tides beat on him as he saw  
A white dress moving in the distant pines

Lake Winter, a five hundred acre man,  
Was English, bred far back, a part of England,  
With South and North and Midland in his blood,  
And somewhere Devon, somewhere Suffolk too  
He had been born of love. They had been lovers,  
Who made him, and no more, but they were lovers.  
She of a proud house, proud to make it prouder  
With wit and beauty, and a young brain glowing,  
And a swift body fearless and pitiful;  
And he a Cotswold yeoman, thrift and power,  
And mastery of earth and herds and flocks,  
And knowledge of all seasons and their fruits,  
And a heart of meditation, all his birthright;  
Ten generations deep from Gloucester stone.  
And those two met, and loved, and of their love  
Came a new purity of blood and limb,  
As of a purpose slowly moulding them.  
And long they waited, and then one summer  
noon,

He, coming northward from his Cotswold home,  
Found her by Rydal as she had bidden him,  
And proudly stride to stride they took the road,  
Sure youth by youth, and to Helvellyn's foot  
They came, and climbed up to the brighter air,  
And into the wind's ardour still went on,

Until upon the mountain top they stood,  
And lake by lake was fading in the dusk  
Out of the plains they saw the moon move up  
And over them the deeper blue came on,  
The faint stars glowing into mastery  
And in that splendour of a summer hill,  
Amid the mellow breathing night, where yet  
The poppies of the valley could not come,  
There was conceived a boy

And sorrow came

Upon their love Before the moon again  
Was full upon Helvellyn, the Cotswold lover  
With a great elm was blasted in a storm,  
And lay, a burnt thing, in a Cotswold grave  
And she went out, took her inheritance,  
And lived apart, and the man-child was born  
She called him Lake, for those fading lakes of  
dusk,  
And gave him her own name And twenty years  
She tended him, and died, and from her substance  
Lake Winter now for fifteen years had kept  
His Sussex acres in fertility  
Such was the man, so born, so passionately made,  
So knit of English earth and generations,  
Who now upon the summer evening watched—

His manhood full upon his middle years  
A white dress moving in the distant pines.

. . . . .

Down to the valley from their hills they came,  
Lake Winter and the woman that he loved  
He waited by a long brown garden wall,  
Mottled with moss and lichen, where in the dusk  
Like a great moth a late flycatcher wove,  
And watched her coming down a rutted path,  
Towards him. And the flowing of her body,  
Sure step through fugitive cadences of limb,  
Up to the little golden arch of hair,  
Was lovely as a known yet wanted tale

. . . . .

Zell Dane, the wife of Martin Dane, who held  
Tollington Manor farm, was ten years wed  
Dane was an honest man by groom and horse,  
Paid pew-rent and his losing wagers, thought  
The British Empire lived at Westminster,  
Stood by the State and rights of property,  
Drank well, and knew the barmaids of a county.  
He married Zell, and neither could have said  
Why it was done. Ten years had gone since then,

And he was now a half-forgotten habit,  
She, some queer porcelain stuff beyond his knowing

Lake Winter came and went at Tollington,  
As other neighbours, a little in Dane's mind  
Suspect for certain rumours of his birth,  
But known for a straight rider and plain speaker,  
Who meant his words and had words for his  
meaning

And Lake and Zell, between the jests at table,  
Where they could match the best wits of the room,  
Would talk of things that Dane and the rest counted  
As pointing ways not good for level minds  
Why pose about Beethoven, and Debussy,  
Or these French fellows Degas and Picasso,  
When there were Marcus Stone, and *A Long, Long  
Trail*,  
And *A Little Grey Home in the West*, that common  
folk  
Could understand ? And, however the truth might  
be,  
It wasn't decent openly to say  
That William Wordsworth was a better poet—  
Though more or less in a poet was no matter—

Because it seemed that once in his flaming youth  
He had loved gloriously in France. . . .

. . . . .

Dane heard and saw,  
And was a little troubled that clear heads  
Should cloud and squander thus, a little scornful.  
Still if it gave them pleasure, and it but meant  
Mind with mind idling together so,  
Winter could come and go for all he cared,  
He wouldn't grudge . . . and then the doubt  
began,  
A thought that somewhere under all this play  
And nimbleness was crouching the true thing,  
Lust, plain lust There was between man and  
woman,  
So Dane had learnt, two several conditions,  
A compact to keep smooth the day's affairs,  
That, and plain lust This mind play was a  
sham. . . .  
Winter and Zell were lusting, that was all . . .  
Then let them . . . damn it, let the matter be . . .  
Time would show all, and there were crops and  
hounds.

. . . . .

They stood together by the dusky wall  
And long their lips met, in a hushed world fading,  
A night of beauty fading in their own  
And then "I made a rhyme for you to-day,  
When the last sheaves were binding I made it,  
thus       "

*I have no strange or subtle thought,  
And the old things are best,  
In curious tongues I am untaught,  
Yet I know rest*

*I know the sifting oakleaves still  
Upon a twilit sky,  
I hear the fernowl on the hill  
Go wheeling by*

*I know my flocks and how they keep  
Their times of field and fold,  
My scholarship can sow and reap,  
From green to gold*

*The circled stars from down to sea  
I reckon as my gains,  
The swallows are as dear to me  
As loaded wains*

*Yet these were ghosts and fugitive,  
Until upon your step they came  
By revelation's lips to live  
In your dear name.*

*I saw you walking as dusk fell,  
And leaves and wains and heaven and birds  
Were miracles my blood may tell,  
And not my words.*

“And yet I would not lose the tidings come  
On so dear words, though the blood knows it all,  
As the song says.” She spoke, and from the valley  
Slowly towards the mill, by ghostly flocks  
That stole about the meadows of the moonrise,  
They walked, and made this argument of love.

*Lake.* How shall they stand for wisdom, who  
forbid  
The body's love, which is so small a thing,  
Yet let the souls, or minds, or what you will  
Be mated, as though spirit were the drudge,  
For no-one's heed, and limbs alone to be,  
As though clay were the gold, inviolate ?

If I could grudge love coming anywhere,  
Falling even on whom I loved in all,  
I think the body at least should have no share  
Of jealousy from me, which should be spent  
Rather on minds meeting above my own,  
Myself an exile from their understanding  
Beloved, in the mating of our minds  
I am all peace to walk thus in your presence,  
And in that peace your body of my desire,  
And all my earth, as passionate as any,  
Seem snares to tempt us to the loss of all,  
Since by them the world threatens this our peace,  
Which else we may so gather, undenied  
Then is not flesh merely the trouble of love,  
When love goes thus, as love between us now ?

Zell took his hand, and her life was in his veins,  
And his words beat back upon him as she spoke

*Zell* Dear, you are wise of all your books, and  
speech  
Of windy downs, and polities of men,  
And the old passions weaving history,  
And strong and gentle things of sea and earth,  
And the poor passing of the life of man,

But not in this. You have your great-heart  
For all such ardours as might make you see  
Some fabled hero standing against fate,  
But not in this. In sifting vanity  
From the right honour, and building from a  
You have a vision constant as the tides,  
But not in this. They may look Sussex ov  
For any man who found a crooked word  
Ever upon your lips, and vainly look,  
Because, dear, truth is an old habit in you,  
But not in this. Here in the night enchan  
With not an ear to catch the whispered tru  
Let nothing but the truth between us be  
I love you, Lake ; I love the fair mind mov  
In equal joy among men's praise or censure  
I love the courage of its lonely flight,  
Here in a land of light convenience.  
I love you for the years that you have givei  
To Sussex plough and pasture till they are ;  
Surer and richer in your wit than any.  
I love you for the love in which you gather  
My mind that from youth on has gone unn  
And then I love you for the bearing kept  
In you when slight occasions something roy  
Take on because you silently are there.

I know you, Lake, for a man worthy honour,  
And well to honour is well to delight  
But, dear, with all this giving of my love,  
Great and unmeasured giving, sending back  
In joy the worship that you bring to me,  
I love your glowing body, and you love mine  
No words, or thrift of philosophic thought,  
Can put that love out of the love we are  
At night, alone, when the dark covers me,  
I ache for you, body for body I ache  
And then I know that over you as well  
The dear, forlorn, resistless pain is full  
We may persuade, virtuously persuade,  
That this is but an accident of love,  
Not of love's very being, a thing to bind  
In brave captivity at the world's bidding,  
But I know, as you know it, that persuasion  
So made is outcast in the house of truth  
I love you, and the thing I love is made  
All wonderful of flesh and spirit both,  
Body and mind inseparably one,  
And I must spend my love on all or nothing  
Should I but love those limbs so rightly planned  
By ancestry so wise of English earth,  
It were a simple harlotry in me

But, Lake, to love the life and not the house,  
The living house so admirably built  
Of tissue flawless as the material stars,  
Wherein the life I love is manifest,  
Were harlotry no less I know than that.

You, the dear Lake of my idolatry,  
For I am something near it, as you are,  
Are one life, whereto pilgrim thought conspires  
With all the cunning moulding of the flesh,  
And of my brain and body is my love,

Dream to your dream, desire to your desire  
If you should die, my memory of you  
Would be no tale of the mere mind conceiving,  
Of contemplation thriving thus or thus,  
In trance of spaces where not even wings nor breath

Recall the moving of substantial things.

Rather in me for ever should be glowing  
The imaging mind mated in equal limbs,  
Thought visible in lines of the athlete,  
Wisdom persuading in the lover's clasp.

And how should thought know thought until the  
whole  
Of body's beauty is by body learnt ?  
Until the trial of that most dear seclusion  
Is past, and all the dangers of mere lust

Disproved, when in possession is no stale  
Regret and disillusion, how should be known  
That the still hours of thought with thought are  
stable

Against the wearing of dissolving time ?  
Dear, we must love by all the tokens of love,  
Before the presence of love beyond dispute  
Is between us and for ever fixed

Lake heard, and knew that answer could be none,  
Then by the sheep-tracks on the silver downs  
Silent they walked, and midnight came apace,  
And by the bases of the mill they went,  
Close moving, arm by arm, and down again  
Towards the valley, where again they stood,  
And let their lives beat out upon the night  
And as they waited on farewell, a form  
Came up before them, and Martin Dane stood  
there,

And " by your leave," he murmured, and went on  
Then Zell, " To morrow, when the moon is full,  
Meet me beside the mill mound Martin goes  
To Farnham for the otter hunting " Lake  
Took her and kissed, and with no word they parted  
Where the light still looked from the hill side farm

Over the valley to his home. And he  
As dreaming passed again by the mill to sleep.

• . . . .  
Firmer the mould, surer the flight of boughs,  
Familiar move the bright plains of the air,  
And newly steadfast the gospel he had known  
Year by year written on his Sussex life,  
Now seemed to Lake this day Among his men,  
All day he drew and pegged the rickyard straw,  
And piled the barn from floor to the swallows' beam,  
Brown throated and brown armed, the golden rose  
Of summer wind glowing upon his face,  
And all the phrasing of his body good.  
And twilight fell on the full harvest home,  
And the barn doors were closed, and painted wagons  
Stood empty by the ricks, with sunken wheels  
Smeared with the fallen husks, and voice was none,  
And silence with the moon was over all

• . . . .  
Lake through the eve walked his familiar paths,  
Counting the labour of his years, the shed  
Where morn and night the cattle came to stall,  
Empty and still now but for the timbering rats,  
The low smooth paven dairy, where the moon  
Now sent a shaft on one full yellow bowl,

The barn so happily at teeming time again,  
The rickyard stacked with hurdles by the fence,  
The long loft over plough and wagon teams  
Among the heavy apple trees he passed,  
By ledgy sheep-track, over the new stubble,  
Across the valley, and in the shadow kept  
Of Martin Dane's home hop-yard, and again  
Back to his own hill-side And in the south,  
Beyond the moon, over the midnight sea,  
Came up a cloud all heavy with black wind

Zell by the mill was standing when he came,  
Now darkly gowned so that she seemed a shadow,  
Black by the black mill, save for the white face,  
And gold hair and white hands that caught the  
moonlight

Together the wide wooden steps they climbed,  
By broken treads and splitting rail, and he  
Lifted the rusted latch, and there within  
Were folded sacks perished along the seam,  
Forgotten with the dust, and the bare walls,  
Now weather broken Above them a dim light  
Showed them a laddered way still up They came  
Into the high roof chamber, and a rent  
In the top timbers let the moonlight in,

Half moulding to their vision spars and beams,  
The mill's old ghostly life, and sail-cloth piled  
From the use of generations A window space  
Just from their towery refuge let them look  
Over familiar earth now tranced. And Lake  
Saw yet again his roofs and acres loved,  
Tenderly, as though interpreters  
Of his long care and their good yielding hours  
Freshly upon his senses ministered, Zell  
Across the valley saw a lone slumbering light,  
While from the south the mounting darkness crept,  
And the wind gathered, moaning upon the mill,  
Filling its frame with a low pulsing breath

And over love the heavenly figures went  
In their unchanging change. No longer now  
The moonlight shafted through the torn roof-  
timbers,  
And star by star crossed the small field of sky,  
And in those hours of peace that only comes  
With passion mated and of passion born,  
Lake knew within him stirring that far beauty  
Of an old starry still Helvellyn night  
And Zell made all the wisdom of her words  
Wisdom of life, so simple and unclouded,

Leaving no fume of trouble in the dark,  
Ending for ever the brain's captivity

They slept And still the south wind gathered up,  
Gust upon gust to a full swelling tide,  
And the great sail-timbers groaned, and blackness  
fell

Over the mill that trembled as in pain  
Of age now nearly with all quarrels done  
Along the ridges of the downs it swept,  
Beating the boughs of ash and elm, a flood  
Of storm exulting in deliverance  
And fury up and down the valleys played  
And rose and spilt and sank upon the hills,  
And to and fro the thunder bayed, till sudden  
The world about the sleeping lovers shook  
With sounding doom And Zell, waking, cried out,  
And he beside her stood, and folded her  
A moment as from fear, and kissed her, and they  
turned  
To go, when from the bases of the mill  
A shrieking as of life being crushed and torn  
Clanged out upon the beating elements,  
And the hurt timbers, whipped and wrencht, sent up  
A last fierce wail, and for a moment swayed,

Then gave the life up of a hundred years,  
And to the earth the mill plunged in defeat.

• • • • •  
Sleepers along the hill-top in the night  
Stirred as a ruin above the thunder broke,  
And slept again. And dawn upon a world  
Of leaves and downs and sheep washed into bright-  
ness

Came on that Sussex out of a clear sky,  
And on the sea the little ships went on  
With sails just filled with a small virgin wind.  
And slowly one by one the village came  
To see the old mill that their sires had known,  
And sires beyond them, blasted in a world  
Where peace was lord as in immortal mood.  
They stood and silence kept them until one  
Saw suddenly upon the dawn breeze blown,  
Out from a mound of split and twisted timber  
A strand of golden hair. And strong arms worked  
Until upon the grass unheeding lay  
'Those two dear bodies locked in a love that now  
Was beyond malice and denial and fear.

• • • • •  
And Martin Dane home from his hunting came,  
And heard, and saw them lying side by side,

And wondered how could folly pay so much  
For so unsound and gossipy an end,  
Gave his instructions for a decent grave,  
And found a tap-room topic to his mind

That night the promise of the dawn was full,  
And on the broken mill a clear moon shone,  
Silvering all the ways the lovers knew  
And by the wreck a shadowy figure watched,  
Half Lake, and half that old Helvellyn lover,  
And on the night a whispered cadence fell—

*Again in the world a story has been made,  
These looked upon beauty unafraid,  
O these were lovely, these were the great ones, they  
dared,  
And denied not, but upon love's bidding fared*

*Pity them not, they would scorn that as your hate,  
They knew the voices, they knew the hours that  
mate  
With hours beyond all judgment of mankind,  
These were the proud adventurers of the mind*

*Kindled for ever because of them shall be  
A wiser freedom. The long lanes of the sea,  
The golden acres of Sussex shall holy keep  
Their names, their love, their ending Let them sleep.*

# *Gold*

THERE is a castle on a hill,  
So far into the sky,  
That birds that from the valley-beds  
Up to the turrets fly,  
Climbing towards the sun can feel  
The clouds go tumbling by

But always far above the clouds  
The sun is shining there,  
It shines for ever on those walls,  
And the great boughs that bear  
Harvests of never fading fruit  
Are golden everywhere

Who journeys to that castled crest  
Finds, with his journey done,  
All ages and all colours in  
Cascades of light that run  
Over the broad weirs of the air  
For ever from the sun

Hereafter in the chambered night  
When linkèd love is told,  
One thought shall spare to climb that hill  
Into the sunbright fold,  
For a great summer noon when love  
Was gold, and gold, and gold.

## *Burning Bush*

FROM babyhood I have known the beauty of earth—  
I learnt it, I think, in the strange months before  
birth,

I learnt it passing and passing by each moon  
From the harvest month into my natal June  
My mother, the dear, the lovely I hardly knew,  
Bearing me must have walked and wandered through  
Stubble of silver or gold, as moon or sun  
Lit earth in the days when my body was begun  
And then October with leaves splendid and blown  
She watched with my little body a little grown,  
And winter fell, and into our being passed  
Firm frost and icy rivers and the blast  
Of winds that on the iron clods of plough  
Beat with an unseen charging Then the bough  
Of spring came green, and her glad body stirred  
With a son's wombed leaping, and she heard  
Songs of the air and woods and waterways,  
And with them singing the coming of my days  
And nesting time drew on to summer flowers,  
And me unborn she taught through patient hours  
Then on that first June day, with spices blown

Of roses over clover crops unmown,  
And grey wind-lifted leaves and blossom of bean,  
She gave her dear white beauty to the keen  
Anguish of women, and brought my body to  
birth

Already skilled in the sculptures of the earth.

Then in the days when her breasts nourished me,  
Daily she walked, that happy girl, to see  
How summer prospered to bring the harvest on,  
And how the gardens and how the orchards shone  
With scarlet and blue and yellow flowers and  
fruit,

And hear with equal love the lonely flute  
Of legendary satyrs in the wood,  
Or the still voice of Christ in bachelorhood.  
And she would come I know to me her son  
With lovely secret gossip of journeys done  
In fields where some day my own feet should go.  
It was not gossip in words that I could not know,  
Mere ease and pleasure for her mother wit,  
But such as I could feel the joy of it  
Beating about my baby blood and sense,  
Maternal tending of intelligence

In the unwhispered rites of bosom and lip,  
Divinings worded in bodily fellowship  
And every shape and colour and scent she knew,  
Were intimations winding, folding, through  
My infancies of flesh and thought, each one  
To find its unblemished record and copy done  
In little moods drawn from the suckling-breast  
That now, in manhood, when I find the nest  
Of the chaffinch moulded in the elder tree,  
And looking on that lichen cup can see  
The images of eternity and space  
Lavished upon a small bird's dwelling-place  
Or when from some blue passage of the sky  
I know that also colour can prophesy  
Or, ghosted on the brushing tides of wheat,  
The gossip of a Galilean street,  
So many Sabbaths gone, I hear again,  
And his hands plucking that immortal grain  
Or when by spectral ancestries I pass  
Again to Eden, as the orchard grass  
Gives out the scent of mellow apples blown  
From windy boughs—all these, I know, were  
known  
By that dear mother when the boy to come  
Was the zeal and gospel of her martyrdom

Then came the time when I could walk with her,  
We pilgrims of the fields, with everywhere  
Strange leaves, and spreading of earth, and hedge-  
row themes,  
And mossy walls, and bubbling of the streams,  
And the way of clouds, and the full moon to  
wane,  
The bird-song in the lilacs after rain,  
And month by month the coming of the flowers,  
For me to learn in speech, as had been ours  
Knowledge unspoken while she fashioned me . . .  
And then she died, and I went on to be  
Through lonely boyhood her disciple still,  
A wanderer by many a Berkshire hill,  
By water-meadows of the Oxford plain,  
By the thick oaks of Avon, with the strain  
Of an old yeoman wisdom dreaming on  
New beauty ever following beauty gone,  
Until I knew my earth and her raiment fair  
In every difference of the seasons' wear,  
Long years her scholar, with learning of her ways  
To slip unleasht all singing into praise  
Should learning yet by some enchantment be  
Bidden to passion's better husbandry.

And the enchanted bidding fell And you,  
O Love, it was that spelt the earth anew

O Love, you silent wayfarer,  
How many years all unaware  
By blackthorn hedge, and spinney green  
With larch, I wandered, while unseen  
You in my shadow walked, nor made  
Even a whisper in the shade

O Love, on many an evening hill  
I watched the day go down, the still  
Dark woods, the far great rivers wind,  
Thin threads of light And I was blind,  
Or seeing knew not, for you were  
Beside me still, yet hidden there

O Love, as year by year went on,  
And budding primroses were gone,  
And berries fell, and still the bright  
Crocuses came in the night,  
You left me to my task alone,  
O Love, so near me and unknown

O Love, though she who bore me set  
Earth's love for ever on me, yet  
Some word withheld still troubled me,  
Some presence that I could not see,  
Till you, dear alien, should come,  
And doctrine be no longer dumb.

O Love, one April night I heard  
The doctrine's everlasting word,  
And you beneath that starry sky,  
Unknown, were with me suddenly,  
Yet there was no new meeting then,  
But some old marriage come again.

O Love, and now is earth my friend,  
Telling me all, until the end  
When I shall in the earth be laid  
With all my maps and fancies made,  
And you, Love, were the secret earth  
Of my blind following from birth.

O Love, you happy wayfarer,  
Be still my fond interpreter,

Of all the glory that can be  
As once on starlit Winchelsea,  
Finding upon my pilgrim way  
A burning bush for every day

# *To My Son*

(AGED SIXTEEN)

DEAR boy unborn. the son but of my dream,  
Promise of yet unrisen day,  
Come, sit beside me, let us talk, and seem  
To take such cares and courage for your way,  
As some year yet we may.

As some year yet, when you, my son to be,  
Look out on life, and turn to go,  
And I, grown grey, shall wish you well, and see  
Myself imprinted as but she could know  
To make amendment so.

I see you then, your sixteen years alight  
With limbs all true and golden hair,  
And you, unborn, I will, this April night,  
Tell of the faith and honour you must wear  
For love, whose light you bear.

Beauty you have, as, mothered so, could face  
Or limbs or hair be otherwise ?

Years gone, dear boy, there was a virgin grace  
Worth Homer's laurel under western skies  
To wander and devise

Beauty you have Cherish it is divine,  
Wash it with dews of diligence,  
Not vainly, but because it is the sign  
Of inward light, the spirit's excellence  
Made visible to sense

Athlete be you, strong runner to the goal,  
Glad though the game be lost or won  
Fleet limbs that chronicle a fleeter soul,  
In every winter valiantly to run,  
Till the last race be done

Love wisdom that is suited in a rhyme,  
And be in all your learning known  
Old minstrels chanting out of faded time,  
Since he who counts all years gone by alone  
Makes any year his own

And when one day you are a lover too,  
Come back to her who bore you, dear,  
Tell out your tale, you shall the better woo  
For every word that from her lips you hear,  
For she made love most clear.

Most clear for him who sits beside you now;  
There was a certain frost that fell  
Before its time upon a summer bough,  
And how at last that reckoning was well,  
She for your love shall tell.

Labour to build your house, but ever keep  
That greater garden fresh in mind,  
That England with its bird-song buried deep  
In cool great woods where chivalry can find  
The province of its kind.

Be great or little your inheritance,  
Know there shall number in that dower  
No treasure from the treasuries of chance  
So rare as that you came the perfect flower  
Of love's most perfect hour.

Go now, my son Be all I might have been  
(Ask her She knows, and none but she )  
Her beauty and her wisdom weathered clean  
Some part of me in you, that you might be  
Her own eternity

\

## *Interlude*

WHAT love is ; how I love ; how builders' clay  
By love is lit into a golden spending ,  
How love calls beautiful ghosts back to the day ;  
How life because of love shall have no ending  
These with the dawn I have begun to sing,  
These with the million-budded noon that's rising  
Shall be a theme, with love's consent, to bring  
My song to some imperishable devising.  
And may the petals of this garland fall  
On every quarrel, and in fragrance bless  
Old friendship ; and a little comfort all  
The weary loves that walk the wilderness,  
While still my song I consecrate alone  
To her who taking it shall take her own.

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